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*THE BOOK OF THE THOUSAND  
NIGHTS AND ONE NIGHT: NOW  
FIRST COMPLETELY DONE INTO ENGLISH  
PROSE AND VERSE, FROM THE ORIGINAL  
ARABIC, BY JOHN PAYNE (AUTHOR  
OF "THE MASQUE OF SHADOWS," "IN-  
TAGLIOS," "SONGS OF LIFE AND DEATH,"  
"LAUTREC," "THE POEMS OF MASTER  
FRANCIS VILLON OF PARIS," "NEW  
POEMS," ETC ETC) IN NINE VOLUMES.  
VOLUME THE FOURTH.*

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*THE BOOK OF THE THOUSAND NIGHTS  
AND ONE NIGHT.*

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HOW THE IMAM ABOU YOUSUF EXTRICATED  
THE KHALIF HAROUN ER RESHID AND HIS  
VIZIER JAAFER FROM A DILEMMA.

It is said that Jaafer the Barmecide was one night carousing with Er Reshid, when the latter said to him, 'O Jaafer, I hear that thou hast bought such and such a slave-girl. Now I have long sought her and my heart is taken up with love of her, for she is passing fair; so do thou sell her to me.' 'O Commander of the Faithful,' replied Jaafer, 'I will not sell her.' 'Then give her to me,' rejoined the Khalif. 'Nor will I give her,' answered Jaafer. 'Be Zubeideh triply divorced,' exclaimed Haroun, 'if thou shalt not either sell or give her to me!' Quoth Jaafer, 'Be my wife triply divorced, if I either sell or give her to thee!' After awhile they recovered from their intoxication and were ware that they had fallen into a grave dilemma, but knew not how to extricate themselves. Then said Er Reshid, 'None can help us in this strait but Abou Yousuf.'<sup>1</sup> So they sent for him, and this was in the middle of the night. When the messenger reached the Imam, he arose in alarm, saying in himself, 'I should not be sent for at this hour, save by reason of

<sup>1</sup> A very famous legist and wit of the eighth century and a prime favourite with Er Reshid. He was one of the chief pupils of the Imam Abou Henifeh (see note, Vol. II. p. 131) and was Caliph of Baghdad under the third, fourth and fifth Khalifs of the Abbasside dynasty.

some crisis in Islam.' So he went out in haste and mounted his mule, saying to his servant, 'Take the mule's nose-bag with thee; it may be she has not finished her feed; and when we come to the Khalif's palace, put the bag on her, that she may eat what is left of her fodder, whilst I am with the Khalif.' 'I hear and obey,' replied the man.

So the Imam rode to the palace and was admitted to the presence of Er Reshid, who made him sit down on the couch beside himself, whereas he was used to seat none but him, and said to him, 'We have sent for thee at this hour to advise us upon a grave matter, with which we know not how to deal.' And he expounded to him the case. 'O Commander of the Faithful,' replied Abou Yousuf, 'this is the easiest of things.' Then he turned to Jaafer and said to him, 'O Jaafer, sell half of her to the Commander of the Faithful and give him the other half; so shall ye both be quit of your oaths.' The Khalif was delighted with this and they did as he prescribed. Then said Er Reshid, 'Bring me the girl at once, for I long for her exceedingly.' So they brought her and the Khalif said to Abou Yousuf, 'I have a mind to lie with her forthright; for I cannot endure to abstain from her during the prescribed period of purification; how is this to be done?' 'Bring me one of thine unenfranchised male slaves,' answered the Imam, 'and give me leave to marry her to him; then let him divorce her before consummation. So shall it be lawful for thee to lie with her before purification.' This expedient pleased the Khalif yet more than the first and he sent for the slave. When he came, Er Reshid said to the Imam, 'I authorize thee to marry her to him.' So the Imam proposed the marriage to the slave, who accepted it, and performed the due ceremony; after which he said to the slave, 'Divorce her, and thou shalt have a hundred dinars.' But he refused to do this

and the Imam went on to increase his offer, till he bid him a thousand dinars. Then said the slave to him,

Doth it rest with me to divorce her, or with thee or the Commander of the Faithful? 'With thee,' answered the Imam. 'Then, by Allah,' quoth the slave, 'I will never do it!'

At this the Khalif was exceeding wroth and said to the Imam, 'What is to be done, O Abou Yousuf?' 'Be not concerned, O Commander of the Faithful,' replied the Imam; 'the thing is easy. Make this slave the dancer's property.' Quoth Er Reshid, 'I give him to her; and the Imam said to the girl, 'Say, "I accept."' So she said, 'I accept:' whereupon quoth Abou Yousuf, 'I pronounce divorce between them, for that he hath become her property, and so the marriage is annulled.' With this, Er Reshid sprang to his feet and exclaimed, 'It is the like of thee that shall be Cadi in my time.' Then he called for sundry trays of gold and emptied them before Abou Yousuf, to whom he said, 'Hast thou wherein to put this? The Imam bethought him of the mule's nose bag; so he sent for it and filling it with gold, took it and went home; and on the morrow, he said to his friends, 'There is no easier or shorter road to the goods of this world and the next, than that of learning; for, see, I have received all this money for answering two or three questions.'

Consider, then, O polite [reader], the pleasantness of this anecdote, for it comprises divers goodly features, amongst which are the complaisance of Jafer to Er Reshid and the wisdom<sup>1</sup> of the Khalif and the exceeding wisdom of Abou Yousuf, may God the Most High have mercy on all their souls!

<sup>1</sup> Shown in choosing so learned a Cadi.

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## THE LOVER WHO FEIGNED HIMSELF A THIEF TO SAVE HIS MISTRESS'S HONOUR.

There came one day to Khalid ibn Abdallah el Kesri,<sup>1</sup> governor of Bassora, a company of men dragging a youth of exceeding beauty and lofty bearing, whose aspect expressed good breeding and dignity and abundant wit. They brought him before the governor, who asked what was to do with him, and they replied, 'This fellow is a thief, whom we caught last night in our dwelling.' Khalid looked at him and was struck with wonder at his well-favouredness and elegance; so he said to the others, 'Loose him,' and going up to the young man, asked what he had to say for himself. 'The folk have spoken truly,' answered he; 'and the case is as they have said.' 'And what moved thee to this,' asked Khalid, 'and thou so noble and comely of aspect?' 'The lust after worldly good,' replied the other, 'and the ordinance of God, glorified and exalted be He!' 'May thy mother be bereaved of thee!' rejoined Khalid. 'Hadst thou not, in thy fair face and sound sense and good breeding, what should restrain thee from thieving?' 'O Amir,' answered the young man, 'leave this talk and proceed to what God the Most High hath ordained; this is what my hands have earned, and God is no oppressor of His creatures.'<sup>2</sup> Khalid was silent awhile, considering the matter; then he said to the young man, 'Verily, thy confession before witnesses perplexes me, for I cannot believe thee to be a thief. Surely thou hast some story that is other than one of theft. Tell it me.' 'O Amir,' replied the youth, 'deem thou nought save

<sup>1</sup> Governor of the two Iraks (*i.e.* Bassora and Cufa) in the reign of Hisham, tenth Khalif of the Omniade dynasty (A.D. 723-741). He was celebrated for his beneficence and liberality.

<sup>2</sup> *Arabs* iii. 178, etc.

what I have confessed ; for I have no story other than that I entered these folk's house and stole what I could lay hands on, and they caught me and took the stuff from me and carried me before thee.' Then Khalid bade clap him in prison and commanded a crier to make proclamation throughout Bassora, saying, ' Ho, whose is needed to look upon the punishment of such an one, the thief, and the cutting off of his hand, let him be present to-morrow morning at such a place !'

When the youth found himself in prison, with irons on his feet, he sighed heavily and repeated the following verses, whilst the tears streamed from his eyes :

Khalid doth threaten me with cutting off my hand, Except I do reveal  
to him my mistress' case.

But, " God forbid," quoth I, " that I should e'er reveal That which of  
love for her my bosom doth embrace !"

The cutting-off my hand, for that I have confessed Unto, less grievous  
were to me than her disgrace.

The warders heard him and went and told Khalid, who sent for the youth after nightfall and conversed with him. He found him well-bred and intelligent and of a pleasant and vivacious wit ; so he ordered him food and he ate. Then said Khalid, ' I know thou hast a story to tell that is no thief's ; so, when the Cadi comes to-morrow morning and questions thee before the folk, do thou deny the charge of theft and avouch what may avert the cutting-off of thy hand ; for the Prophet (whom God bless and preserve) saith, " In cases of doubt, eschew [or defer] **Niqā** punishment." ' Then he sent him back to the prison, **cxixb** where he passed the night.

On the morrow, the folk assembled to see his hand cut off, nor was there man or woman in Bassora but came forth to look upon his punishment. Then Khalid mounted in company of the notables of the city and others and summoning the Cadi, sent for the young man, who came,

hobbling in his shackles. There was none saw him but wept for him, and the women lifted up their voices in lamentation. The Cadi bade silence the women and said to the prisoner, 'These folk avouch that thou didst enter their dwelling and steal their goods: belike thou stolest less than a quarter dinar?' 'Nay,' replied he, 'I stole more than that.' 'Peradventure,' rejoined the Cadi, 'thou art partner with them in some of the goods?' 'Not so,' replied the young man; 'it was all theirs. I had no right in it.' At this Khalid was wroth and rose and smote him on the face with his whip, applying this verse to his own case:

Man wisheth and seeketh his wish to fulfil, But Allah denieth save that which He will.

Then he called for the executioner, who came and taking the prisoner's hand, set the knife to it and was about to cut it off, when, behold, a damsel, clad in tattered clothes, pressed through the crowd of women and cried out and threw herself on the young man. Then she unveiled and showed a face like the moon; whereupon the people raised a mighty clamour and there was like to have been a riot amongst them. But she cried out her loudest, saying, 'I conjure thee, by Allah, O Amir, hasten not to cut off this man's hand, till thou have read what is in this scroll!' So saying, she gave him a scroll, and he took it and read therein the following verses:

O Khalid, this man is love-maddened, a slave of desire, Transfixed by the glances that sped from the bows of my eye.  
The shafts of my looks 'twas that pierced him and slew him; indeed, He a bondsman of love, sick for passion and like for to die.  
Yea, rather a crime, that he wrought not, he choose to confess Than suffer on her whom he cherished dishonour to lie.  
Have ruth on a sorrowful lover; indeed he's no thief, But the noblest and truest of mortals for passion that sigh.

<sup>1</sup> "The hand of a thief shall not be cut off for stealing less than a quarter of a dinar." — *Mishkat ul Masabih*.

When he had read this, he called the girl apart and questioned her ; and she told him that the young man was her lover and she his mistress. He came to the dwelling of her people, thinking to visit her, and threw a stone into the house, to warn her of his coming. Her father and brothers heard the noise of the stone and sallied out on him ; but he, hearing them coming, caught up all the household stuff and made as if he would have stolen it, to cover his mistress's honour. 'So they seized him,' continued she, 'saying, "A thief!" and brought him before her, whereupon he confessed to the robbery and persisted in his confession, that he might spare me dishonour ; and this he did, making himself a thief, of the exceeding nobility and generosity of his nature.'

'He is indeed worthy to have his desire,' replied Khalid and calling the young man to him, kissed him between the eyes. Then he sent for the girl's father and bespoke him, saying, 'O elder, we thought to punish this young man by cutting off his hand ; but God (to whom belong might and majesty) hath preserved us from this, and I now adjudge him the sum of ten thousand dirhems, for that he would have sacrificed his hand for the preservation of thine honour and that of thy daughter and the sparing you both reproach. Moreover, I adjudge other ten thousand dirhems to thy daughter, for that she made known to me the truth of the case ; and I ask thy leave to marry him to her.' 'O Amir,' rejoined the old man, 'thou hast my consent.' So Khalid praised God and thanked Him **Night** and offered up a goodly exhortation and prayer ; after **ccxcix.** which he said to the young man, 'I give thee this damsel to wife, with her own and her father's consent ; and her dowry shall be this money, to wit, ten thousand dirhems.' 'I accept this marriage at thy hands,' replied the youth and Khalid let carry the money on trays in procession to the young man's house, whilst the people dispersed, full of

gladness. And surely [quoth he who tells the tale<sup>1</sup>] never saw I a rarer day than this, for that its beginning was weeping and affliction and its end joy and gladness.

### JAAFER THE BARMECIDE AND THE BEAN-SELLER.

When Haroun er Reshid put Jaafer the Barmecide to death, he commanded that all who wept or made moan for him should be crucified; so the folk abstained from this. Now there was a Bedouin from a distant desert, who used every year to make and bring to Jaafer an ode in his honour, for which he rewarded him with a thousand dinars; and the Bedouin took them and returning to his own country, lived upon them, he and his family, for the rest of the year. Accordingly, he came with his ode at the wonted time and finding Jaafer done to death, betook himself to the place where his body was hanging, and there made his camel kneel down and wept sore and mourned grievously. Then he recited his ode and fell asleep. In his sleep Jaafer the Barmecide appeared to him and said, 'Thou hast wearied thyself to come to us and findest us as thou seest; but go to Bassora and ask for such a man there of the merchants of the town and say to him, "Jaafer the Barmecide salutes thee and bids thee give me a thousand dinars, by the token of the bean."<sup>1</sup>

When the Bedouin awoke, he repaired to Bassora, where he sought out the merchant and repeated to him what Jaafer had said in the dream; whereupon he wept sore, till he was like to depart the world. Then he welcomed the Bedouin and entertained him three days as an honoured guest; and when he was minded to depart, he gave him a thousand and five hundred dinars, saying, 'The thousand

<sup>1</sup> El Asinat the poet, author or compiler of the well-known romance of Antar

are what is commanded to thee, and the five hundred are a gift from me to thee; and every year thou shalt have of me a thousand dinars.' When the Bedouin was about to take leave, he said to the merchant, 'I conjure thee, by Allah, tell me the story of the bean, that I may know the origin of all this.' 'In the early part of my life,' replied the merchant, 'I was miserably poor and hawked hot boiled beans about the streets of Baghdad for a living.

I went out one cold, rainy day, without clothes enough on my body to protect me from the weather, now shivering for excess of cold and now stumbling into the pools of rain-water, and altogether in so piteous a plight as would make one shudder to look upon. Now it chanced that Jaafer was seated that day, with his officers and favourites, in an upper chamber overlooking the street, and his eye fell on me; so he took pity on my case and sending one of his servants to fetch me to him, said to me, "Sell thy beans to my people." So I began to mete out the beans with a measure I had with me, and each who took a measure of beans filled the vessel with gold pieces, till the basket was empty. Then I gathered together the money I had gotten, and Jaafer said to me, "Hast thou any beans left?" "I know not," answered I and sought in the basket, but found only one bean. This Jaafer took and splitting it in twain, kept one half himself and gave the other to one of his favourites, saying, "For how much wilt thou buy this half-bean?" "For the tale of all this money twice-told," replied she; whereat I was confounded and said in myself, "This is impossible." But, as I stood wondering, she gave an order to one of her handmaids, and the girl brought me the amount twice-told. Then said Jaafer, "And I will buy my half for twice the sum of the whole. Take the price of thy bean." And he gave an order to one of his servants, who gathered together the whole of the money and laid it in my basket; and I took

it and departed. Then I betook myself to Bassora, where I traded with the money and God prospered me, to Him be the praise and the thanks! So, if I give thee a thousand dinars a year of the bounty of Jaafer, it will in no wise irk me.' Consider then the munificence of Jaafer's nature and how he was praised both alive and dead, the mercy of God the Most High be upon him!

### ABOU MOHAMMED THE LAZY.

It is told that Haroun er Reshid was sitting one day on the throne of the Khalifate, when there came in to him a youth of his eunuchs, bearing a crown of red gold, set with pearls and rubies and all manner other jewels, such as money might not buy, and kissing the ground before him, **Night** said, 'O Commander of the Faithful, the lady Zubeideh **III.** kisses the earth before thee and saith to thee, thou knowest she hath let make this crown, which lacks a great jewel for its top; and she hath made search among her treasures, but cannot find a jewel to her mind.' Quoth the Khalif to his chamberlains and officers, 'Make search for a great jewel, such as Zubeideh desires.' So they sought, but found nothing befitting her and told the Khalif, who was vexed thereat and exclaimed, 'Am I Khalif and king of the kings of the earth and lack of a jewel? Out on ye! Enquire of the merchants.' So they enquired of the merchants, who replied, 'Our lord the Khalif will not find a jewel such as he requires save with a man of Bassora, by name Abou Mohammed the Lazy.' They acquainted the Khalif with this and he bade his Vizier Jaafer send a letter to the Amir Mohammed ez Zubeidi, governor of Bassora, commanding him to equip Abou Mohammed the Lazy and bring him to Baghdad.

Jaafer accordingly wrote a letter to that effect and despatched it by Mesrour, who set out forthright for

Bassora and went in to the governor, who rejoiced in him and entreated him with the utmost honour. Then Mesrour read him the Khalif's mandate, to which he replied, 'I hear and obey,' and forthwith despatched him, with a company of his followers, to Abou Mohammed's house. When they reached it, they knocked at the door, whereupon a servant came out and Mesrour said to him, 'Tell thy master that the Commander of the Faithful calls for him.' The servant went in and told his master, who came out and found Mesrour, the Khalif's chamberlain, and a company of the governor's men at the door. So he kissed the earth before Mesrour and said, 'I hear and obey the summons of the Commander of the Faithful; but enter ye my house.' 'We cannot do that,' replied Mesrour, 'save in haste; for the Commander of the Faithful awaits thy coming.' But he said, 'Have patience with me a little, till I set my affairs in order.' So, after much pressure and persuasion, they entered and found the corridor hung with curtains of blue brocade, figured with gold, and Abou Mohammed bade one of his servants carry Mesrour to the bath. Now this bath was in the house and Mesrour found its walls and floor of rare and precious marbles, wrought with gold and silver, and its waters mingled with rose-water. The servants served Mesrour and his company on the most perfect wise and clad them, on their going forth of the bath, in robes of honour of brocade, interwoven with gold.

Then they went in to Abou Mohammed and found him seated in his upper chamber upon a couch inlaid with jewels. Over his head hung curtains of gold brocade, wrought with pearls and jewels, and the place was spread with cushions, embroidered in red gold. When he saw Mesrour, he rose to receive him and bidding him welcome, seated him by his side. Then he called for food: so they brought the table of food, which when Mesrour saw, he

exclaimed, 'By Allah, never saw I the like of this in the palace of the Commander of the Faithful!' For indeed it comprised all manner of meats, served in dishes of gilded porcelain. So they ate and drank and made merry till the end of the day, when Abou Mohammed gave Mesrour and each of his company five thousand dinars; and on the morrow he clad them in dresses of honour of green and gold and entreated them with the utmost honour. Then said Mesrour to him, 'We can abide no longer, for fear of the Khalif's displeasure.' 'O my lord,' answered Abou Mohammed, 'have patience with us till to-morrow, that we may equip ourselves, and we will then depart with you.' So they tarried that day and night with him; and next morning, Abou Mohammed's servants saddled him a mule with housings and trappings of gold, set with all manner pearls and jewels; whereupon quoth Mesrour in himself, 'I wonder if, when he presents himself in this equipage before the Commander of the Faithful, he will ask him how he came by all this wealth.'

Then they took leave of Ez Zubeidi and setting out from Bassora, fared on, without stopping, till they reached Baghdad and presented themselves before the Khalif, who bade Abou Mohammed be seated. So he sat down and addressing the Khalif in courtly wise, said to him, 'O Commander of the Faithful, I have brought with me a present by way of homage: have I thy leave to produce it?' 'There is no harm in that,' replied the Khalif; whereupon Abou Mohammed caused bring in a chest, from which he took a number of rarities and amongst the rest, trees of gold, with leaves of emerald and fruits of rubies and topazes and pearls. Then he fetched another chest and brought out of it a pavilion of brocade, adorned with pearls and rubies and emeralds and chrysolites and other precious stones; its poles were of the finest Indian aloes-wood, and its skirts were set with emeralds. Thereon

were depicted all manner beasts and birds and other created things, spangled with rubies and emeralds and chrysolite and balass rubies and other precious stones.

When Er Reshid saw these things, he rejoiced exceedingly, and Abou Mohammed said to him, 'O Commander of the Faithful, deem not that I have brought these to thee, fearing aught or coveting aught; but I knew myself to be but a man of the people and that these things befitted none save the Commander of the Faithful. And now, with thy leave, I will show thee, for thy diversion, something of what I can do.' 'Do what thou wilt,' answered Er Reshid, 'that we may see.' 'I hear and obey,' said Abou Mohammed and moving his lips, beckoned to the battlements of the palace, whereupon they inclined to him; then he made another sign to them, and they returned to their place. Then he made a sign with his eye, and there appeared before him cabinets with closed doors, to which he spoke, and lo, the voices of birds answered him [from within]. The Khalif marvelled exceedingly at this and said to him, 'How camest thou by all this, seeing that thou art only known as Abou Mohammed the Lazy, and they tell me that thy father was a barber-surgeon, serving in a public bath, and left thee nothing?' 'O Commander of the Faithful,' answered he, 'listen to my story, for it is an extraordinary one and its particulars are wonderful; were it graven with needles upon the corners of the eye, it would serve as a lesson to him who can profit by admonition.' 'Let us hear it,' said the Khalif.

'Know then, O Commander of the Faithful,' replied Abou Mohammed, '(may God prolong to thee glory and dominion,) that the report of the folk, that I am known as the Lazy and that my father left me nothing, is true; for he was, as thou hast said, but a barber surgeon in a bath. In my youth I was the laziest wight on the face of the earth; indeed, so great was my sluggishness that, if I lay

Night  
cccl.

asleep in the sultry season and the sun came round upon me, I was too lazy to rise and remove from the sun to the shade; and thus I abode till I reached my fifteenth year, when my father was admitted to the mercy of God the Most High and left me nothing. However, my mother used to go out to service and feed me and give me to drink, whilst I lay on my side.

One day, she came in to me, with five silver dirhems, and said to me, "O my son, I hear that the Sheikh Aboul Muzeffer is about to go a voyage to China." (Now this Sheikh was a good and charitable man and loved the poor.) "So come, let us carry him these five dirhems and beg him to buy thee therewith somewhat from the land of China, so haply thou mayst make a profit of it, by the bounty of God the Most High!" I was too lazy to move; but she swore by Allah that, except I rose and went with her, she would neither bring me meat nor drink nor come in to me, but would leave me to die of hunger and thirst. When I heard this, O Commander of the Faithful, I knew she would do as she said; so I said to her, "Help me to sit up." She did so, and I wept the while and said to her, "Bring me my shoes." Accordingly, she brought them and I said, "Put them on my feet." She put them on my feet and I said, "Lift me up." So she lifted me up and I said, "Support me, that I may walk." So she supported me and I went along thus, still stumbling in my skirts, till we came to the river-bank, where we saluted the Sheikh and I said to him, "O uncle, art thou Aboul Muzeffer?" "At thy service," answered he, and I said, "Take these dirhems and buy me somewhat from the land of China: haply, God may vouchsafe me a profit of it." Quoth the Sheikh to his companions, "Do ye know this youth?" "Yes," replied they; "he is known as Abou Mohammed the Lazy, and we never saw him stir from his house till now." Then said he to me,

"O my son, give me the dirhems and the blessing of God the Most High go with them!" So he took the money, saying, "In the name of God!" and I returned home with my mother.

Meanwhile the Sheikh set sail, with a company of merchants, and stayed not till they reached the land of China, where they bought and sold, and having done their intent, set out on their homeward voyage. When they had been three days at sea, the Sheikh said to his company, "Stay the ship!" And they asked him what was to do with him. "Know," replied he, "that I have forgotten the commission with which Abou Mohammed the Lazy charged me; so let us turn back, that we may buy him somewhat whereby he may profit." "We conjure thee, by God the Most High," exclaimed they, "turn not back with us; for we have traversed an exceeding great distance and endured sore hardship and many perils." Quoth he, "There is no help for it;" and they said, "Take from us double the profit of the five dirhems and turn not back with us." So he agreed to this and they collected for him a great sum of money.

Then they sailed on, till they came to an island, wherein was much people; so they moored thereto and the merchants went ashore, to buy thence precious metals and pearls and jewels and so forth. Presently, Aboul Muzaffer saw a man seated, with many apes before him, and amongst them one whose hair had been plucked off. As often as the man's attention was diverted from them, the other apes fell upon the plucked one and beat him and threw him on their master; whereupon the latter rose and beat them and bound them and punished them for this, and all the apes were wroth with the plucked ape therefor and beat him the more. When Aboul Muzaffer saw this, he took compassion upon the plucked ape and said to his master, "Wilt thou sell me yonder ape?" "Buy," replied

the man, and Aboul Muzeffer rejoined, "I have with me five dinhems, belonging to an orphan lad. Wilt thou sell me the ape for that sum?" "He is thine," answered the ape-merchant. "May God give thee a blessing of him!" So the Sheikh paid the money and his slaves took the ape and tied him up in the ship.

Then they loosed sail and made for another island, where they cast anchor; and there came down divers, who dived for pearls and corals and other jewels. So the merchants hired them for money and they dived. When the ape saw this, he did himself loose from his bonds and leaping off the ship's side, dived with them; whereupon quoth Aboul Muzeffer, "There is no power and no virtue but in God the Most High, the Supreme! The ape is lost to us, by the [ill] fortune of the poor fellow for whom we bought him." And they despaired of him; but, after awhile, the company of divers rose to the surface, and with them the ape, with his hands full of jewels of price, which he threw down before Aboul Muzeffer, who marvelled at this and said, "There hangs some great mystery by this ape!"

Then they cast off and sailed till they came to a third island, called the Island of the Zunouj,<sup>1</sup> who are a people of the blacks, that eat human flesh. When the blacks saw them, they boarded them in canoes and taking all in the ship, pinioned them and carried them to their king who bade slaughter certain of the merchants. So they slaughtered them and ate their flesh; and the rest passed the night in prison and sore concern. But, when it was [mid]night, the ape arose and going up to Aboul Muzeffer, did off his bonds. When the others saw him free, they said, "God grant that our deliverance may be at thy hands, O Aboul Muzeffer!" But he replied, "Know that he who delivered me, by God's leave, was none other than this ape; and I buy my release of him at a thousand dinars."

<sup>1</sup> Zanzibar (*ant.* Zengibar).

"And we likewise," rejoined the merchants, "will pay him a thousand dinars each, if he release us." With this, the ape went up to them and loosed their bonds, one by one, till he had freed them all, when they made for the ship and boarding her, found all safe and nothing missing. So they cast off and set sail; and presently Aboul Muzaffer said to them, "O merchants, fulfil your promise to the ape." "We hear and obey," answered they and paid him a thousand dinars each, whilst Aboul Muzaffer brought out to him the like sum of his own monies, so that there was a great sum of money collected for the ape.

Then they fared on till they reached the city of Bassora, where their friends came out to meet them; and when they had landed, the Sheikh said, "Where is Abou Mohammed the Lazy?" The news reached my mother, who came to me, as I lay asleep, and said to me, "O my son, the Sheikh Aboul Muzaffer has come back and is now in the city; so go thou to him and salute him and enquire what he hath brought thee; it may be God hath blessed thee with somewhat." "Lift me from the ground," quoth I, "and prop me up, whilst I walk to the river-bank." So she lifted me up and I went out and walked on, stumbling in my skirts, till I met the Sheikh, who exclaimed, at sight of me, "Welcome to him whose money has been the means of my delivery and that of these merchants, by the will of God the Most High! Take this ape that I bought for thee and carry him home and wait till I come to thee." So I took the ape, saying in myself, "By Allah, this is indeed rare merchandise!" and drove it home, where I said to my mother, "Whenever I lie down to sleep, thou biddest me rise and trade; see now this merchandise with thine own eyes."

Then I sat down, and presently up came Aboul Muzaffer's slaves and said to me, "Art thou Abou Mohammed the Lazy?" "Yes," answered I; and behold, Aboul Muzaffer

appeared behind them. So I went up to him and kissed his hands; and he said to me, "Come with me to my house." "I hear and obey," answered I and followed him to his house, where he bade his servants bring me the money [and what not else the ape had earned me]. So they brought it and he said to me, "O my son, God hath blessed thee with this wealth, by way of profit on thy five dirhems." Then the slaves laid the treasure in chests, which they set on their heads, and Aboul Muzeffar gave me the keys of the chests, saying, "Go before the slaves to thy house; for all this wealth is thine." So I returned to my mother, who rejoiced in this and said to me, "O my son, God hath blessed thee with this much wealth; so put off thy laziness and go down to the bazaar and sell and buy." So I shook off my sloth, and opened a shop in the bazaar, where the ape used to sit on the same divan with me, eating with me when I ate and drinking when I drank. But, every day, he was absent from daybreak till noon-day, when he came back, bringing with him a purse of a thousand dinars, which he laid by my side, and sat down. Thus did he a great while, till I amassed much wealth, wherewith I bought houses and lands and planted gardens and got me slaves, black and white and male and female.

One day, as I sat in my shop, with the ape at my side, he began to turn right and left, and I said in myself, "What ails the beast?" Then God made the ape speak with a glib tongue, and he said to me, "O Abou Mohammed!" When I heard him speak, I was sore afraid; but he said to me, "Fear not; I will tell thee my case. Know that I am a Marid of the Jinn and came to thee, because of thy poor estate; but to-day thou knowest not the tale of thy wealth; and now I have a need of thee, wherein if thou do my will, it shall be well for thee." "What is it?" asked I, and he said, "I have a mind to marry thee to

a girl like the full moon." "How so?" quoth I. "To-morrow," replied he, "don thou thy richest clothes and mount thy mule, with the saddle of gold, and ride to the forage-market. There enquire for the shop of the Sherif<sup>1</sup> and sit down beside him and say to him, 'I come to thee as a suitor for thy daughter's hand.' If he say to thee, 'Thou hast neither money nor condition nor family,' pull out a thousand dinars and give them to him; and if he ask more, give him more and tempt him with money." "I hear and obey," answered I; "to-morrow, if it please God, I will do thy bidding."

So on the morrow I donned my richest clothes and mounting my mule with trappings of gold, rode, attended by half a score slaves, black and white, to the forage-market, where I found the Sherif sitting in his shop. I Night alighted and saluting him, seated myself beside him. Quoth he, "Haply, thou hast some business with us, which we may have the pleasure of transacting?" "Yes," answered I; "I have business with thee." "And what is it?" asked he. Quoth I, "I come to thee as a suitor for thy daughter's hand." And he said, "Thou hast neither money nor condition nor family;" whereupon I pulled out a thousand dinars of red gold and said to him, "This is my rank and family; and he whom God bless and keep hath said, 'The best of ranks is wealth.' And how well saith the poet:

Whoso hath money, though it be but dirhems twain, his lips Have learnt  
all manner speech and he can speak and fear no slight.  
His brethren and his mates draw near and hearken to his word And  
'mongst the folk thou seest him walk, a glad and proudful wight.  
But for the money, in the which he glorieth on this wise, Thou'dst find  
him, midst his fellow-men, in passing sorry plight.

<sup>1</sup> The word *Sherif* (*ist. noble*) signifies strictly a descendant of the martyr Hussein, son of the Khalif Ali; but it is here used in the sense of "chief [of the bazaar]."

Yea, whensoever the rich man speaks, though in his speech he err, 'Thou hast not spoken a vain thing,' they say; 'indeed, thou'rt right.' But, for the poor man, an he speak, albeit he say sooth, They say, 'Thou liest,' and make void his speech and hold it light. For money, verily, in all the lands beneath the sun, With goodliness and dignity doth its possessors dight. A very tongue it is for him who would be eloquent And eke a weapon to his hand who hath a mind to fight."

When he heard this, he bowed his head awhile, then, raising it, said, "If it must be so, I will have of thee other three thousand dinars." "I hear and obey," answered I and sent one of my servants to my house for the money. When he came back with it, I handed it to the Sherif, who rose and bidding his servants shut his shop, invited his brother-merchants to the wedding; after which he carried me to his house and drew up the contract of marriage between his daughter and myself, saying to me, "After ten days, I will bring thee in to her." So I went home rejoicing and shutting myself up with the ape, told him what had passed; and he said, "Thou hast done well."

When the time appointed by the Sherif drew near, the ape said to me, "There is a thing I would fain have thee do for me; and after, thou shalt have of me what thou wilt." "What is that?" asked I. Quoth he, "At the upper end of the bridechamber stands a cabinet, on whose door is a padlock of brass and the keys under it. Take the keys and open the cabinet, in which thou wilt find a coffer of iron, with four talismanic flags at its angles. In its midst is a brass basin full of money, wherein is tied a white cock with a cleft comb; and on one side of the coffer are eleven serpents and on the other a knife. Take the knife and kill the cock; cut away the flags and overturn the chest; then go back to the bride and do away her maidenhead. This is what I have to ask of thee." "I hear and obey," answered I and betook myself to the Sherif's house.

As soon as I entered the bridechamber, I looked for the cabinet and found it even as the ape had described it. Then I went in to the bride and marvelled at her beauty and grace and symmetry, for indeed they were such as no tongue can set forth. So I rejoiced in her with an exceeding joy; and in the middle of the night, when she slept, I rose and taking the keys, opened the cabinet. Then I took the knife and killed the cock and threw down the flags and overturned the coffer, whereupon the girl awoke and seeing the closet open and the cock slain, exclaimed, "There is no power and no virtue but in God the Most High, the Supreme! The Marid hath gotten me!" Hardly had she made an end of speaking, when the Marid came down upon the house and seizing the bride, flew away with her; whereupon there arose a great clamour and in came the Sherif, buffeting his face. "O Abou Mohammed," said he, "what is this thou hast done? Is it thus thou requitest us? I made the talisman in the cabinet in my fear for my daughter from this accursed one; for these six years hath he sought to steal away the girl, but could not. But now there is no more abiding for thee with us; so go thy ways."

So I went out and returned to my own house, where I made search for the ape, but could find no trace of him; whereby I knew that he was the Marid, who had taken my wife and had tricked me into destroying the talisman that hindered him from taking her, and repented, rending my clothes and buffeting my face; and there was no land but was straitened upon me. So I made for the desert, knowing not whither I should go, and wandered on, absorbed in melancholy thought, till night overtook me. Presently, I saw two serpents fighting, a white one and a tawny. So I took up a stone and throwing it at the tawny serpent, which was the aggressor, killed it; whereupon the white serpent made off, but returned after awhile,

accompanied by ten others of the same colour, which went up to the dead serpent and tore it in pieces, till but the head was left. Then they went their ways and I fell prostrate for weariness on the ground where I stood; but, as I lay, pondering my case, I heard a voice repeat the following verses, though I saw no one:

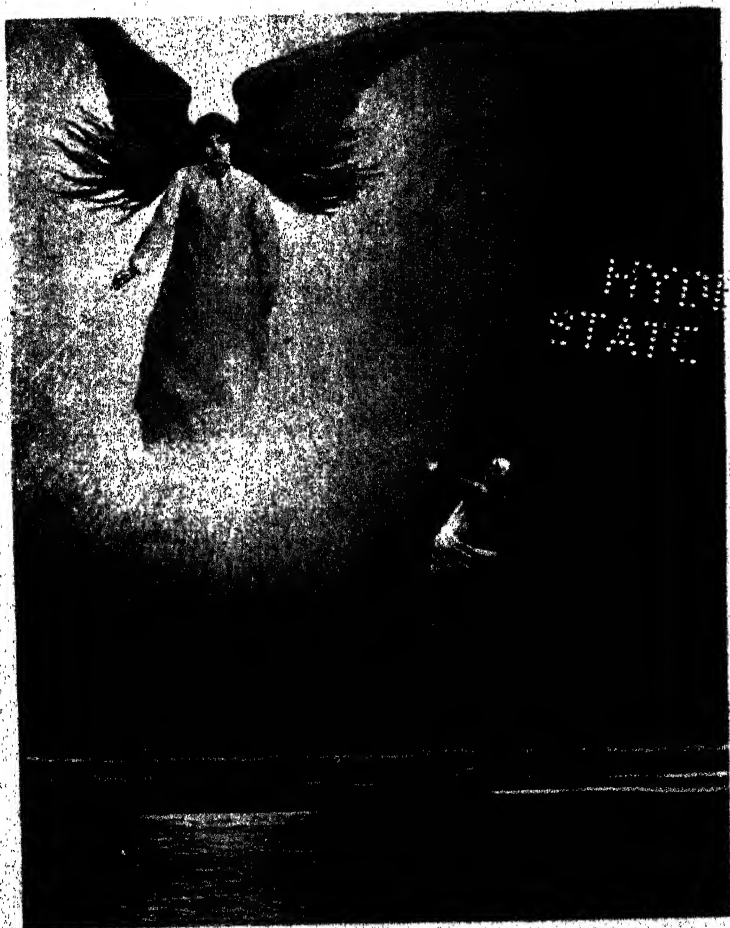
Let destiny with slackened rein its course appointed fare And lie thou  
down by night to sleep with heart devoid of care.  
For, 'twixt the closing of the eyes and th' opening thereof, God hath it  
in His power to change a case from foul to fair.

When I heard this, great concern got hold of me and I was beyond measure troubled; and I heard a voice from behind me repeat these verses also:

Muslim, whose guide's the Koran and his clue, Rejoice, for succour  
cometh thee unto.

Let not the wiles of Satan make thee rue, For we're a folk whose  
creed's the One, the True.

Then said I, "I conjure thee by Him whom thou worshipping, let me know who thou art!" Thereupon the unseen speaker appeared to me, in the likeness of a man, and said, "Fear not; for the report of thy good deed hath reached us, and we are a people of the true-believing Jinn. So, if thou lack aught, let us know it, that we may have the pleasure of fulfilling thy need." "Indeed," answered I, "I am in sore need, for there hath befallen me a grievous calamity, whose like never yet befell man." Quoth he, "Surely, thou art Abou Mohammed the Lazy?" And I answered, "Yes." "O Abou Mohammed," rejoined the genie, "I am the brother of the white serpent, whose enemy thou slewest. We are four brothers, by one father and mother, and we are all indebted to thee for thy kindness. Know that he who played this trick on thee, in the likeness of an ape, is a Marid of the Marids of the Jinn; and had he not used this artifice, he had never been able to take the girl; for





he hath loved her and had a mind to take her this long while, but could not win at her, being hindered of the talisman; and had it remained as it was, he could never have done so. However, fret not thyself for that; we will bring thee to her and kill the Marid; for thy kindness is not lost upon us."

Then he cried out with a terrible voice, and behold, **Nisbi** there appeared a company of Jinn, of whom he enquired **ccub.** concerning the ape, and one of them said, "I know his abiding-place; it is in the City of Brass, upon which the sun riseth not." Then said the first genie to me, "O Abou Mohammed, take one of these our slaves, and he will carry thee on his back and teach thee how thou shalt get back the girl: but know that he is a Marid and beware lest thou utter the name of God, whilst he is carrying thee; or he will flee from thee, and thou wilt fall and be destroyed." "I hear and obey," answered I and chose out one of the slaves, who bent down and said to me, "Mount." So I mounted on his back, and he flew up with me into the air, till I lost sight of the earth and saw the stars as they were fixed mountains and heard the angels glorifying God in heaven, what while the Marid held me in converse, diverting me and hindering me from pronouncing the name of God. But, as we flew, behold, one clad in green raiment, with streaming tresses and radiant face, holding in his hand a javelin whence issued sparks of fire, accosted me, saying, "O Abou Mohammed, say, 'There is no god but God and Mohammed is His apostle;' or I will smite thee with this javelin."

Now I was already sick at heart of my [forced] abstinence from calling on the name of God; so I said, "There is no god but God and Mohammed is His apostle." Whereupon the shining one smote the Marid with his javelin and he melted away and became ashes; whilst I was precipitated from his back and fell headlong toward

the earth, till I dropped into the midst of a surging sea, swollen with clashing billows. Hard by where I fell was a ship and five sailors therein, who, seeing me, made for me and took me up into the boat. They began to speak to me in some tongue I knew not; but I signed to them that I understood not their speech. So they fared on till ended day, when they cast out a net and caught a great fish and roasting it, gave me to eat; after which they sailed on, till they reached their city and carried me in to their king, who understand Arabic. So I kissed the ground before him, and he bestowed on me a dress of honour and made me one of his officers. I asked him the name of the city, and he replied, "It is called Henad and is in the land of China." Then he committed me to his Vizier, bidding him show me the city, which was formerly peopled by infidels, till God the Most High turned them into stones; and there I abode a month's space, diverting myself with viewing the place, nor saw I ever greater plenty of tree and fruits than there.

One day, as I sat on the bank of a river, there accosted me a horseman, who said to me, "Art thou not About Mohammed the Lazy?" "Yes," answered I; whereupon, "Fear not," said he; "for the report of thy good deed hath reached us." Quoth I, "Who art thou?" And he answered, "I am a brother of the white serpent, and thou art hard by the place where is the damsel whom thou seekest." So saying, he took off his [outer] clothes and clad me therein, saying, "Fear not; for he, that perished under thee, was one of our slaves." Then he took me up behind him and rode on with me, till we came to a desert place, when he said to me, "Alight now and walk on between yonder mountains till thou seest the City of Brass; then halt afar off and enter it not, till I return to thee and teach thee how thou shalt do." "I hear and obey," replied I and alighting, walked on till I came to the city, the walls

whereof I found of brass. I went round about it, looking for a gate, but found none; and presently, the serpent's brother rejoined me and gave me a charmed sword that should hinder any from seeing me, then went his way.

He had been gone but a little while, when I heard a noise of cries and found myself in the midst of a multitude of folk whose eyes were in their breasts. Quoth they, "Who art thou and what brings thee hither?" So I told them my story, and they said, "The girl thou seekest is in the city with the Marid; but we know not what he hath done with her. As for us, we are brethren of the white serpent. But go to yonder spring and note where the water enters, and enter thou with it; for it will bring thee into the city." I did as they bade me and followed the water-course, till it brought me to a grotto under the earth, from which I ascended and found myself in the midst of the city. Here I saw the damsel seated upon a throne of gold, under a canopy of brocade, midmost a garden full of trees of gold, whose fruits were jewels of price, such as rubies and chrysolites and pearls and coral.

When she saw me, she knew me and accosted me with the [obligatory] salutation, saying, "O my lord, who brought thee hither?" So I told her all that had passed, and she said, "Know that the accursed Marid, of the greatness of his love for me, hath told me what doth him hurt and what profit and that there is here a talisman by means whereof he could, an he would, destroy this city and all that are therein. It is in the likeness of an eagle, with I know not what written on it, and whoso possesses it, the Afrits will do his commandment in everythiug. It stands upon a column in such a place; so go thou thither and take it. Then set it before thee and taking a chafing-dish, throw into it a little musk, whereupon there will arise a smoke, that will draw all the Afrits to thee, and they will all present themselves before thee, nor shall one be absent; and

whatsoever thou biddest them, that will they do. Arise therefore and do this thing, with the blessing of God the Most High."

"I hear and obey," answered I and going to the column, did what she bade me, whereupon the Afrits presented themselves, saying, "Here are we, O our lord! Whatsoever thou biddest us, that will we do." Quoth I, "Bind the Maid that brought the damsel hither." "We hear and obey," answered they and disappearing, returned after awhile and informed me that they had done my bidding. Then I dismissed them and returning to my wife, told her what had happened and said to her, "Wilt thou go with me?" "Yes," answered she. So I carried her forth of the city, by the underground channel, and we tared on, till we fell in with the folk who had shown me the way into the city. I besought them to teach me how I should return to my native land; so they brought us to the seashore and set us aboard a ship, which sailed on with us with a fair wind, till we reached the city of Bassora. Here we landed, and I carried my wife to her father's house, and when her people saw her, they rejoiced with an exceeding joy. Then I fumigated the eagle with musk and the Afrits flocked to me from all sides, saying, "At thy service; what wilt thou have us do?" I bade them transport all that was in the City of Brass of gold and silver and jewels and precious things to my house in Bassora, which they did; and I then ordered them to fetch the ape. So they brought him before me, abject and humiliated, and I said to him, "O accursed one, why hast thou dealt thus perfidiously with me?" Then I commanded the Afrits to shut him in a brazen vessel: so they put him in a strait vessel of brass and sealed it with lead. But I abode with my wife in joy and delight; and now, O Commander of the Faithful, I have under my hand such stores of precious things and rare jewels and other treasure as neither





reckoning may comprise nor measure suffice unto All this is of the bounty of God the Most High, and it thou desire aught of money or what not, I will bid the Jinn bring it to thee forthright.'

The Khalif wondered greatly at his story and bestowed on him royal gifts, in exchange for his presents, and entreated him with the favour he deserved.

### THE GENEROUS DEALING OF YEHYA BEN KHALID THE BARMECIDE WITH MENSOUR.

It is told that Haroun er Reshid, in the days before he became jealous of the Barmecides, sent once for one of his guards, Salih by name, and said to him, 'O Salih, go to Mensour<sup>1</sup> and say to him, "Thou owest us a thousand thousand dirhems and we require of thee immediate payment of the amount." And I charge thee, O Salih, an he pay it not before sundown, sever his head from his body and bring it to me.' 'I hear and obey,' answered Salih and going to Mensour, acquainted him with what the Khalif had said, whereupon quoth he, 'By Allah, I am a lost man; for all my estate and all my hand owns, if sold for their utmost value, would not fetch more than a hundred thousand dirhems. Whence then, O Salih, shall I get the other nine hundred thousand?' 'Contrive how thou mayst speedily acquit thyself,' answered Salih; 'else art thou a dead man; for I cannot grant thee a moment's delay after the time appointed me by the Khalif, nor can I fail of aught that he hath enjoined on me. Hasten, therefore, to devise some means of saving thyself ere the time expire.' 'O Salih,' quoth Mensour, 'I beg thee of thy favour to bring me to my house, that I may take leave of my children and family and give my kinsfolk my last injunctions.'

<sup>1</sup> *Quers* Mensour en Nemri, a well-known poet of the time and (originally) a protégé of Yehya's son, El Feri.

So he carried him to his house, where he fell to bidding his family farewell, and the house was filled with a clamour of weeping and lamentation and calling on God for help. Then Salih said to him, 'I have bethought me that God may peradventure vouchsafe thee relief at the hands of the Barmecides. Come, let us go to the house of Yehya ben Khalid.' So they went to Yehya's house, and Mensour told him his case, whereat he was sore concerned and bowed his head awhile; then raising it, he called his treasurer and said to him, 'How much money have we in our treasury?' 'Five thousand dirhems,' answered the treasurer, and Yehya bade him bring them and sent a message to his son Fezl, saying, 'I am offered for sale estates of great price, that may never be laid waste; so send me somewhat of money.' Fezl sent him a thousand thousand dirhems, and he despatched a like message to his son Jaafer, who also sent him a thousand thousand dirhems; nor did he leave sending to his kinsmen of the Barmecides, till he had collected from them a great sum of money for Mensour. But the latter and Salih knew not of this; and Mensour said to Yehya, 'O my lord, I have laid hold upon thy skirt, for I know not whither to look for the money but to thee; so discharge thou the rest of my debt for me, in accordance with thy wonted generosity, and make me thy freed slave.' Thereupon Yehya bowed his head and wept; then he said to a page, 'Harkye, boy, the Commander of the Faithful gave our slave-girl Denanir a jewel of great price: go thou to her and bid her send it us.' The page went out and presently returned with the jewel, whereupon quoth Yehya, 'O Mensour, I bought this jewel of the merchants for the Commander of the Faithful, for two hundred thousand dinars, and he gave it to our slave-girl Denanir the lutanist. When he sees it with thee, he will know it and spare thy life and do thee honour for our sake; and now thy money is complete.'

Salih took the money and the jewel and carried them to the Khalif, together with Mensour; but on the way, he heard the latter repeat this verse, applying it to his case:

It is not love, indeed, my feet to them that led; Nay, but because the stroke of th' arrows I did dread.

When Salih heard this, he marvelled at the baseness and attitude of Mensour's nature, and turning upon him, 'There is none on the face of the earth better than the necides, nor any baser nor more depraved than thou; they bought thee off from death and saved thee from ruination, giving thee what should deliver thee; yet thou kiest them not nor praisest them, neither acquittest after the manner of the noble; nay, thou requitest benevolence with this speech.' Then he went to Khalid and acquainted him with all that had passed; and marvelled at the generosity and benevolence of Yehya Khalid and the baseness and ingratitude of Mensour. He bade restore the jewel to Yehya, saying, 'That which I have given, it befits not that we take again.'

Salih returned to Yehya and acquainted him with Mensour's ill conduct; whereupon, 'O Salih,' replied he, 'when a man is in distress, sick at heart and distracted by melancholy thought, he is not to be blamed for aught that falls from him; for it comes not from the heart.' And he fell to seeking excuse for Mensour. But Salih wept [in the tale] and exclaimed, 'Never shall the revolving years bring forth into being the like of thee, O Yehya! that one of such noble nature and generosity should be buried beneath the earth!' And he repeated the following verses:

It is not to do the kindnesses thou hast a mind unto; For bounty is not possible at every tide and hour.  
How many a man denies his soul to do the generous deed, To which his fate, till lack of means deprive him of the power!

Night  
cccl.

## THE GENEROUS DEALING OF YEHYA BEN KHALID WITH A MAN WHO FORGED A LETTER IN HIS NAME.

There was between Yehya ben Khalid and Abdallah ben Malik el Khuzai<sup>1</sup> a secret enmity, the reason whereof was that Haroun er Reshid loved the latter with an exceeding love, so that Yehya and his sons were wont to say that he had bewitched the Khalif; and thus they abode a long while, with rancour in their hearts, till it fell out that the Khalif invested Abdallah with the government of Armenia and sent him thither. Soon after he had established himself in his seat of government, there came to him one of the people of Irak, a man of excellent parts and good breeding, who had lost his wealth and wasted his substance, and his estate was come to nought; so he forged a letter to Abdallah in Yehya's name and set out therewith for Armenia. When he came to the governor's gate, he gave the letter to one of the chamberlains, who carried it to his master. Abdallah read it and considering it attentively, knew it to be forged; so he sent for the man, who presented himself before him and called down blessings upon him and praised him and those of his court. Quoth Abdallah to him, 'What moved thee to weary thyself thus and bring me a forged letter? But be of good heart; for we will not disappoint thy travail.' 'God prolong the life of our lord the Vizier!' replied the other. 'If my coming irk thee, cast not about for a pretext to repel me, for God's earth is wide and the Divine Provider liveth. Indeed, the letter I bring thee from Yehya ben Khalid is true and no forgery.' Quoth Abdallah, 'I will write a letter to my

<sup>1</sup> Intendant of the palace to Haroun er Reshid and captain of his guards.

agent at Baghdad and bid him enquire concerning the letter. If it be true, as thou sayest, I will bestow on thee the government of one of my cities; or, if thou prove a present, I will give thee two hundred thousand dirhems, besides horses and camels of price and a robe of honour. But, if the letter prove a forgery, I will have thee beaten with two hundred blows of a stick and thy beard shaven.'

Accordingly, he bade confine him in a privy chamber and furnish him therein with all he needed, till his case should be made manifest. Then he despatched a letter to his agent at Baghdad, to the following purport: 'There is come to me a man with a letter purporting to be from Yehya ben Khalid. Now I have my doubts of this letter, so delay thou not, but go thyself and learn the truth of the case and let me have an answer in all speed.' When the letter reached the agent, he mounted at once and betook himself to the house of Yehya ben Khalid, whom he found sitting with his officers and boon-companions. So he gave him the letter and he read it and said to the agent, 'Come back to me to-morrow, against I write thee an answer.'

When the agent had gone away, Yehya turned to his companions and said, 'What doth he deserve who forgeth a letter in my name and carrieth it to my enemy?' They all answered, saying this and that, each proposing some kind of punishment; but Yehya said, 'Ye err in that ye say and this your counsel is of the meanness and baseness of your spirits. Ye all know the close favour of Abdallah with the Khalif and what is between him and us of despoite and enmity; and now God the Most High hath made this man an intermediary, to effect a reconciliation between us, and hath appointed him to quench the fire of hate in our hearts, which hath been growing this score years; and by his means our differences shall be accorded. Wherefore it behoves me to requite him by confirming his

expectation and amending his estate; so I will write him a letter to Abdallah, to the intent that he may use him with increase of honour and liberality.'

When his companions heard what he said, they called down blessings on him and marvelled at his generosity and the greatness of his magnanimity. Then he called for paper and ink and wrote Abdallah a letter in his own hand, to the following effect: 'In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful! Thy letter hath reached me (may God give thee long life!) and I have read it and rejoice in thy health and well being. It was thy thought that yonder worthy man had forged a letter in my name and that he was not the bearer of any message from me; but the case is not so, for the letter I myself wrote, and it was no forgery; and I hope, of thy courtesy and benevolence and the nobility of thy nature, that thou wilt fulfil this generous and excellent man of his hope and wish and use him with the honour he deserves and bring him to his desire and make him the special object of thy favour and munificence. Whatever thou dost with him, it is to me that thou dost it, and I am beholden to thee accordingly.' Then he superscribed the letter and sealing it, delivered it to the agent, who despatched it to Abdallah.

When the latter read it, he was charmed with its contents and sending for the man, said to him, 'Now will I give thee which thou wilt of the two things I promised thee.' 'The gift were more acceptable to me than aught else,' replied the man; whereupon Abdallah ordered him two hundred thousand dirhems and ten Arab horses, five with housings of silk and other five with richly ornamented saddles of state, besides twenty chests of clothes and ten mounted white slaves and a proportionate quantity of jewels of price. Moreover, he bestowed on him a dress of honour and sent him to Baghdad in great state. When he came thither, he repaired to Yehya's house, before he

went to his own folk, and sought an audience of him. So the chamberlain went in to Yehya and said to him, 'O my lord, there is one at our door who craves speech of thee; and he is a man of apparent wealth and consideration, comely of aspect and attended by many servants.' Yehya bade admit him; so he entered and kissed the ground before him. 'Who art thou?' asked Yehya; and he answered, 'O my lord, I am one who was dead from the tyranny of fortune; but thou didst raise me again from the grave of calamities and preferredst me to the paradise of [my] desires. I am he who forged a letter in thy name and carried it to Abdallah ben Malek el Khuzai.' 'How hath he dealt with thee,' asked Yehya, 'and what did he give thee?' Quoth the man, 'He hath made me rich and overwhelmed me with presents and favours, thanks to thee and thy great generosity and magnanimity and to thine exceeding goodness and abounding munificence and thine all-embracing liberality. And now, behold, I have brought all that he gave me, and it is at thy door; for it is thine to command, and the decision is in thy hand.' 'Thou hast done me better service than I thee,' rejoined Yehya; 'and I owe thee thanks without stint and abundant largesse, for that thou hast changed the enmity that was between me and yonder man of worship into love and friendship. Wherefore I will give thee the like of what Abdallah gave thee.' Then he ordered him money and horses and apparel, such as Abdallah had given him; and thus that man's fortune was restored to him by the munificence of these two generous men.

## THE KHALIF EL MAMOUN AND THE STRANGE DOCTOR.

It is said that there was none, among the Khalifs of the house of Abbas, more accomplished in all branches of knowledge than El Mamoun. On two days in each week, he was wont to preside at conferences of the learned, when the doctors and theologians met and sitting, each in his several rank and room, disputed in his presence. One day, as he sat thus, there came into the assembly a stranger, clad in worn white clothes, and sat down in an obscure place, behind the doctors of the law. Then the assembled scholars began to speak and expound difficult questions, it being the custom that the various propositions should be submitted to each in turn and that whoso bethought him of some subtle addition or rare trait, should make mention of it. So the question went round till it came to the stranger, who spoke in his turn and made a goodlier answer than that of any of the doctors; and the Khalif **Night** approved his speech and bade advance him to a higher **cebbut.** room. When the second question came round to him, he made a still more admirable answer, and the Khalif ordered him to be preferred to a yet higher place. When the third question reached him, he made answer more justly and appropriately than on the two previous occasions, and El Mamoun bade him come up and sit near himself. When the conference broke up, water was brought and they washed their hands; after which food was set on and they ate. Then the doctors arose and withdrew; but El Mamoun forbade the stranger to depart with them and calling him to himself, entreated him with especial favour and promised him honour and benefits.

Presently, they made ready the banquet of wine; the fair-faced boon-companions came and the cup went round

amongst them, till it came to the stranger, who rose to his feet and said, 'If the Commander of the Faithful permit me, I will say one word.' 'Say what thou wilt,' answered the Khalif. Quoth the stranger, 'Verily, the Exalted Intelligence<sup>1</sup> (whose eminence God increase!) knoweth that his slave was this day, in the august assembly, one of the unknown folk and of the meanest of the company, and the Commander of the Faithful distinguished him and brought him near to himself, little as was the wit he showed, preferring him above the rest and advancing him to a rank whereto his thought aspired not: and now he is minded to deprive him of that small portion of wit that raised him from obscurity and augmented him, after his littleness. God forbend that the Commander of the Faithful should envy his slave what little he hath of understanding and worth and renown! But, if his slave should drink wine, his reason would depart from him and ignorance draw near to him and steal away his good breeding; so would he revert to that low degree, whence he sprang, and become contemptible and ridiculous in the eyes of the folk. I hope, therefore, that the August Intelligence, of his power and bounty and royal generosity and magnanimity, will not despoil his slave of this jewel.'

When the Khalif heard his speech, he praised him and thanked him and making him sit down again in his place, showed him high honour and ordered him a present of a hundred thousand dinars. Moreover he mounted him upon a horse and gave him rich apparel; and in every assembly he exalted him and showed him favour over all the other doctors, till he became the highest of them all in rank. •

<sup>1</sup> i.e. the Khalif.

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## ALI SHAR AND ZUMURRUD.

THE *old* once, *o* old days, in the land of Khorassan,  
 a merchant called Mejd edin, who had great wealth and  
 many slaves and servants, black and white; but he was  
 childless until he reached the age of threescore, when  
 God the Most High vouchsafed him a son, whom he  
 named ALI SHAR. The boy grew up like the moon on  
 the night of its full, and when he came to man's estate  
 and was endowed with all kinds of perfection, his father  
 fell sick of a mortal malady and calling his son to him,  
 said to him, 'O my son, the hour of my death is at  
 hand, and I desire to give thee my last injunctions.  
 'And what are they, O my father?' asked Ali. 'O my  
 son,' answered Mejd eddin, 'I charge thee, be not [too]  
 familiar with any and eschew what leads to evil and  
 mischief. Beware lest thou company with the wicked,  
 for he is like the blacksmith; if his fire burn thee not,  
 his smoke irks thee: and how excellent is the saying of  
 the poet:

There is no man in all the world whose love thou shouldst desire, No  
 friend who, if fate play thee false, will true and constant be.  
 Where ere I'd have thee live apart and lean for help on none. In this I  
 give thee good advice; so let it profit thee.

And what another saith:

Men are a latent malady; Count not on them, I counsel thee.  
 An it thou look into their case, They're full of guile and perfidy

And yet a third:

The company of men will profit thee in nought, Except to pass away  
 the time in idle prate;  
 So spare thou to converse with them, except it be For gain of lore and  
 wit or mending of estate.

And a fourth

If a quick-witted man have made proof of mankind, I have seen a time,  
where but for all that he,  
And have seen the refinement but practice and thought by the way  
found their reason to be.

'O my father,' said Ali, 'I hear and obey: what more  
shall I do?' 'Do good when thou art able to do it,' an-  
swered his father, 'be ever courteous and courteous to wo-  
men and profit by all occasions of doing a kindness: for  
a design is not always easy of accomplishment, and now  
well saith the poet:

'Tis not at every time and season that to do Kind offices is easy  
unto you;  
So, when the occasion serves, make haste to perform it, Let thy aim be  
the power should fail thee thereunto.'

'I hear and obey,' answered Ali, 'what more?' 'Be **Night**  
mindful of God,' continued Mejdaddin, 'and He will be **with**  
mindful of thee. Husband thy wealth and squander it not,  
for, if thou do, thou wilt come to have need of the least  
of mankind. Know that the measure of a man's worth is  
according to that which his right hand possesses, and now  
well saith the poet:

If wealth should fail, there is no friend will be in company, But whilst  
my substance yet abounds, all men are friends to me.  
How many a foe for mine sake hath comraded with me! How many  
a friend for loss thereof hath turned mine enemy!

'What more?' asked Ali. 'O my son,' said Mejdaddin,  
'take counsel of those who are older than thou and hasten  
not to do thy heart's desire. Have compassion on those  
that are below thee, so shall those that are above thee  
have compassion on thee; and oppress none, lest God  
set over thee one who shall oppress thee. How well saith  
the poet.

All lo'ers' wit to thine and counsel still ensue ; For that the course of  
 light is not concealed from two.  
 One mirror shows a man his face, but, if thereto Another one he add,  
 his nape he thus can view.

And as saith another :

Be slow to move and hasten not to snatch thy heart's desire : Be merciful  
 to all, and thou on mercy reckonest ;  
 For no power is there but the hand of God is over it, And no oppressor  
 but shall be with worse than he oppress.

And yet another :

Do no oppression, whilst the power thereto is in thine hand ; For still  
 in peril of revenge the sad oppressor goes.  
 Thine eyes will sleep anon, what while the oppress, on wake, call down  
 Curses upon thee, and God's eye shuts never in repose.

Beware of drinking wine, for it is the root of all evil : it  
 does away the reason and brings him who uses it into con-  
 tempt ; and how well saith the poet :

By Allah, wine shall never invade me, whilst my soul Endureth in my  
 body and my thoughts my words control !  
 Not a day long will I turn me to the zephyr-freshened bowl, And for  
 friend I'll choose him only who of wine-bibbing is whole.

This, then,' added Mejdeddin, 'is my charge to thee ;  
 keep it before thine eyes, and may God stand to thee in my  
 stead.' Then he swooned away and kept silence awhile.  
 When he came to himself, he besought pardon of God and  
 making the profession of the Faith, was admitted to the  
 mercy of the Most High. His son wept and lamented for  
 him and made due preparation for his burial. Great and  
 small attended him to the grave and the readers recited  
 the Koran about his bier ; nor did Ali Shar omit aught of  
 what was due to the dead. Then they prayed over him  
 and committed him to the earth, gravings these words upon  
 his tomb :

Created of the dust thou wast and cam'st to 'life And eloquence didst  
 learn and spokest many a word ;  
 Then to the dust again returnedst and wast dead, As 'twere 'from out the  
 dust, indeed, thou'dst never stirred.

His son Ali Shar grieved sore for him and mourned him  
 after the wont of men of condition ; nor did he cease  
 therefrom till his mother died also, not long afterward,  
 when he did with her as he had done with his father.  
 Then he sat in the shop, selling and buying and consort-  
 ing with none of God's creatures, in accordance with his  
 father's injunction.

On this wise he abode for a year, at the end of which  
 time there came in to him certain whoreson fellows by  
 craft and companied with him, till he turned with them to  
 lewdness and swerved from the right way, drinking wine  
 in goblets and frequenting the fair night and day ; for he  
 said in himself, 'My father amassed this wealth for me,  
 and if I spend it not, to whom shall I leave it ? By Allah,  
 I will not do save as saith the poet :

If all the days of thy life thou get And heap up treasure, to swell thy  
 hoard,  
 When wilt thou use it and so enjoy That thou hast gathered and gained  
 and stored ?'

Then he ceased not to squander his wealth all tides of  
 the day and watches of the night, till he had made away  
 with it all and abode in evil case and troubled at heart.  
 So he sold his shop and lands and so forth, and after this  
 he sold the clothes off his body, leaving himself but one  
 suit. Then drunkenness left him and thought came to  
 him, and he fell into melancholy.

One day, when he had sat from day-break to mid-after-  
 noon without breaking his fast, he said in himself, 'I will  
 go round to those on whom I spent my wealth : it may be  
 one of them will feed me this day.' So he went the round  
 of them all ; but, as often as he knocked at any one's door,

the man did to him (I and hid from him, till he was  
 Night med with him. Then he betook himself to the  
 till at where he found a crowd of people, assembled in  
 a ring round somewhat, and said in himself, 'I wonder  
 what it is the folk to crowd together thus? By Allah, I  
 will not remove hence, till I see what is within yonder  
 ring.' So he made his way into the ring and found that  
 the crowd was called by a damsel exposed for sale. She  
 was five feet high, slender of shape, rosy cheeked and  
 highly sooned and surprised all the people of her time in  
 beauty and grace and elegance and perfection, even as  
 saith one, describing her:

As she wished, she was created, after such a wise that lo! She in beauty's  
 mould was fashioned, perfect, neither less nor more

Loveliness itself enamoured of her lovely aspect is, Coyness decks her  
 and upon her, pride and pudour sweetly show

In her face the full moon glitters and the bunch is as her shape; Musk  
 her breath is, nor midst mortals is her equal, high or low

'Tis as if she had been moulded out of water of pure pearls; In each  
 member of her beauty is a very moon, I trow.

And her name was Zumurrud.

When Ali Shar saw her, he marvelled at her beauty and  
 grace and said, 'By Allah, I will not stir hence till I see  
 what price this girl fetches and know who buys her!' So  
 he stood with the rest of the merchants, and they thought  
 he had a mind to buy her, knowing the wealth he had  
 inherited from his parents. Then the broker stood at the  
 damsel's head and said, 'Ho, merchants! Ho, men of  
 wealth! Who will open the biddings for this damsel, the  
 mistress of moons, the splendid pearl, Zumurrud the Cur-  
 tain maker, the aim of the seeker and the delight of the  
 desirous? Open the biddings, and on the opener be nor  
 blame nor reproach.'

So one merchant said, 'I bid five hundred dinars for  
 her.' And ten,' said another. 'Six hundred,' cried an old

man named Reshideddin, dyed and foul of face  
 'And then, quoth another, 'I had a thousand' returned  
 Reshideddin, whereupon the other merchant went away  
 and he broker took counsel with the girl's owner who  
 said 'I have sworn not to let her yet, when she shall  
 choose, consult her.' So the broker went up to Zumar  
 and said to her, 'O mistress of mine, yonder man  
 hath a mind to buy thee. Sh'looked at Reshideddin  
 finding him as we have said aforetime, 'I will not be sold  
 to a grey beard, whom decrepitude hath brought to ex-  
 plight.' 'Bravo,' quoth I, 'for one who saith

I asked her for a kiss one day, but she my hoary head saw, thought  
 wealth and worldly good I had great plenty.  
 So, with a proud and flow'ring air, her back she turned on me. And, "No,  
 by Him who forbiddeth men from evil things," she said  
 "Now, by God's truth, I never had a moment hoary hairs. And shall  
 my mouth be stalled, forsooth, with cotton, ere I'm dead?"

'By Allah,' quoth the broker, 'thou art excusable, and  
 thy value is ten thousand dirhams.' So he told her owner  
 that 'he would not accept of Reshideddin' and he said,  
 'Ask her of another.' Thereupon another man came for-  
 ward and said, 'I will take her at the same price.' So  
 he looked at him and seeing that his beard was dyed black  
 'What is this lewd and shameful fashion and blackening  
 of the face of hoariness?' And she made a great show of  
 amazement and repeated the following verses

A sight, and what a sight, did such an one present to mine! A neck, to  
 beat with shoes, by Allah, meant!  
 And eke a beard for lice a cushioning ground that was. And brows  
 binding on of ropes all crook'd and bent.<sup>1</sup>  
 Thou that my cheeks and shape have ravished, with a lie Thou do  
 disguise thyself and reck'st not, impudent,

<sup>1</sup> i.e. As if he were an old Bedouin, with forehead disfigured by the  
 friction of the rope of camel's hair, which is part of the Bedouin head-  
 dress

Down thy hoary hairs digressively with black<sup>1</sup> And hiding what  
 a crafty, with fraudulent intent;  
 As thou purpoosest thou wert, with one beard go'st And with another  
 com'st again, incontinently.

And how we'll saith another:

Quoth she to me, "I see thou dy'st thy hoariness;" and I, "I do but  
 hide it from thy sight, O thou my ear and eye!"<sup>2</sup>  
 He laughed out mockingly and said, "A wonder 't is indeed! Thou so  
 abundant in deceit that even thy hair's a lie."

'By Allah,' quoth the broker, 'thou hast spoken truly!' The merchant asked what she said: so the broker repeated the verses to him, and he knew that she was in the right and desisted from buying her. Then another came forward and would have bought her at the same price; but she looked at him and seeing that he had but one eye, said, 'This man is one-eyed; and it is of such as he that the poet saith:

Consort not with him that is one-eyed a day, And be on thy guard  
 'gainst his mischief and lies:  
 For God, if in him aught of good had been found, Had not curst him  
 with blindness in one of his eyes.'

Then the broker brought her another bidder and said to her, 'Wilt thou be sold to this man?' She looked at him and seeing that he was short of stature and had a beard that reached to his navel, said, 'This is he of whom the poet speaks, when he says:

I have a friend, who has a beard, that God Caused flourish without  
 profit, till, behold,  
 'Tis, as it were, to look upon, a night Of middle winter, long and dark  
 and cold.'

'O my lady,' said the broker, 'look who pleases thee of

<sup>1</sup> Mohammed said, "Change the whiteness of your hair, but not with anything black." Henna is the approved hairdye for a true-believer; it changes the hair to a reddish-brown.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* thou that art as dear to me as my sight and hearing.

these that are present, and point him out, that I may sell thee to him.' So she looked round the ring of merchants, examining them one by one, till her eyes rested on Ali Shar. His sight cost her a thousand sighs and her heart. **Night** was taken with him: for that he was passing fair of favour **xxxv.** and more pleasant than the northern zephyr; and she said, 'O broker, I will be sold to none but my lord there, him of the handsome face and slender shape, whom the poet describes in the following verses:

They showed thy lovely fare and railed At her whom ravishment assailed.

Had they desired to keep me chaste, Thy face so fair they should have veiled.

None shall possess me but he,' added she; 'for his cheek is smooth and the water of his mouth sweet as Selsebil;<sup>1</sup> his sight is a cure for the sick and his charms confound poet and proser, even as saith one of him:

The water of his mouth is wine, and very musk The fragrance of his breath; his teeth are camphor white.

Rizwan hath put him out from Paradise, for fear The black-eyed girls of heaven be tempted with the wight.

Men blame him for his pride; but the full moon's excuse, How proud soe'er it be, finds favour in our sight.

Him of the curling locks and rose-red cheeks and enchanting glances, of whom saith the poet:

A slender loveling promised me his favours fair and free; So my heart's restless and my eye looks still his sight to see.

His eyelids warranted to me the keeping of his troth; But how shall they, that bankrupt<sup>2</sup> are, fulfil their warranty?

And as saith another:

<sup>\*</sup>  
"The script of whiskers on his cheek," quoth they, "is plain to see: How canst thou then enamoured be of him, and whiskered he?"

<sup>1</sup> A fountain of Paradise.

<sup>2</sup> *Syn.* languishing (*munkesir*).

Quoth I, "Have done with blinde leavies ere it is too late. An  
if it be a very script, it is a forgery.  
I hope the gift is a false, cheek thou art so laden with. And more by  
spoken at us lips are Kather, I really."

When the broker heard the verses she repeated on the  
charms of Ali Shar, he marvelled at her eloquence, no less  
than at the brightness of her beauty; but her owner said  
to him, 'Marvel not at her beauty, that shames the sun of  
day, nor that her mind is stored with the choicest verses  
of the poets: for, besides this, she can repeat the glorious  
Koran, according to the seven readings, and the august  
Traditions, after the authentic text; and she writes the  
seven hands and is versed in more branches of knowledge  
than the most learned doctor. Moreover, her hands are  
better than gold and silver; for she makes curtains of silk  
and sells them for fifty dinars each; and it takes her eight  
days to make a curtain.' 'Happy the man,' exclaimed the  
broker, 'who hath her in his house and maketh her of his  
privy treasures!' And her owner said, 'Sell her to whom  
she will.' So the broker went up to Ali Shar and kissing  
his hands, said to him, 'O my lord, buy thou this damsel,  
for she hath made choice of thee.' Then he set forth to  
him all her charms and accomplishments, and added, 'I  
give thee joy, if thou buy her, for she is a gift from Him  
who is no niggard of His giving.'

Ali bowed his head awhile, laughing to himself and  
saying inwardly, 'Up to now I have not broken my fast;  
yet I am ashamed to own before the merchants that I  
have no money wherewith to buy her.' The damsel, see-  
ing him hang down his head, said to the broker, 'Take  
my hand and lead me to him, that I may show myself to  
him and tempt him to buy me; for I will not be sold to  
any but him.' So the broker took her hand and stationed  
her before Ali Shar, saying, 'What is thy pleasure, O my

<sup>1</sup> A river of Paradise.

lord?' But he made him no answer, and the girl said to him, 'O my lord and darling of my heart, what ails thee that thou wilt not bid for me? Buy me for what thou wilt, and I will bring thee good fortune.' Ali raised his eyes to her and said, 'Must I buy thee perforce? Thou art dear at a thousand dinars.' 'Then buy me for nine hundred,' answered she. 'Nay,' rejoined he; and she said, 'Then for eight hundred;' and ceased not to abate the price, till she came to a hundred dinars. Quoth he, 'I have not quite a hundred dinars.' 'How much dost thou lack of a hundred?' asked she, laughing. 'By Allah,' replied he, 'I have neither a hundred dinars, nor any other sum; for I own neither white money nor red, neither dinar nor dirhem. So look out for another customer.' When she knew that he had nothing, she said to him, 'Take me by the hand and carry me aside into a passage, as if thou wouldst examine me privily.' He did so and she took from her bosom a purse containing a thousand dinars, which she gave him, saying, 'Pay down nine hundred to my price and keep the rest to provide us withal.'

He did as she bade him and buying her for nine hundred dinars, paid down the price from the purse and carried her to his house, which when she entered, she found nothing but bare floors, without carpets or vessels. So she gave him other thousand dinars, saying, 'Go to the bazaar and buy three hundred dinars' worth of furniture and vessels for the house and three dinars' worth of meat and drink, also a piece of silk, the size of a curtain, and gold and silver thread and [sewing] silk of seven colours.' He did her bidding, and she furnished the house and they sat down to eat and drink; after which they went to bed and took their pleasure, one of the other. And they lay the night embraced and were even as saith the poet:

Clear as the sun in the sky and the stars in the night;  
 And on a note of love were  
 Lo, what a sight, methinks I saw, as I gazed on thee,  
 In the sweetest of all forms, a maid  
 As true as certain till I die, I will avow, A life for thee,  
 That I dare yet withstand.  
 If thou wilt, I will stand, or eve to look on thee, Than when  
 One heart is the other's double lover twin,  
 And to the other's heart is dear, and in their twinned delight, Would  
 He with hand and arm with arm about their necks enchain,  
 Lo, when two hearts are struthly knit in passion and desire, But on cold  
 Iron snute the folk who chide at them in vain.  
 Thou, that for loving censurest the votaries of love, Canst thou assuage  
 A heart diseased or heal a cankered brain?  
 If in thy time thou find but one to love thee and be true, I bade thee  
 Cast the world away and with that one remain.

They lay together till the morning and love for the  
 other was established in the heart of each of them. On  
 the morrow, Zumurrud took the curtain and embroidered  
 it with coloured silks and gold and silver thread, depicting  
 thereon all manner birds and beasts; nor is there in the  
 world a beast but she wrought on the curtain the semblant  
 thereof. Moreover, she made thereto a band, with figures  
 of birds, and wrought at it eight days, till she had made  
 an end of it, when she trimmed it and ironed it and gave  
 it to Ali, saying, 'Carry it to the bazaar and sell it to one  
 of the merchants for fifty dinars; but beware lest thou sell  
 it to a passer-by, for this would bring about a separation  
 between us, because we have enemies who are not un-  
 mindful of us.' 'I hear and obey,' answered he and re-  
 pairing to the bazaar, sold the curtain to a merchant, as  
 she bade him; after which he bought stuff for another  
 curtain and silk and gold and silver thread as before and  
 what they needed of food, and brought all this to her,  
 together with the rest of the money.

They abode thus a whole year, and every eight days she  
 made a curtain, which he sold for fifty dinars. At the end

of the year he went to the bazaar, as usual, with a curtain, which he gave to the broker; and there came up to him a Christian, who bid him threescore dinars for the curtain; but he refused, and the Christian went on to bid higher and higher, till he came to a hundred dinars and bribed the broker with ten gold pieces. So the latter returned to Ali and told him of this and urged him to accept the offer, saying, 'O my lord, be not afraid of this Christian, for he can do thee no hurt.' The merchants also were instant with him to accept the offer; so he sold the curtain to the Christian, though his heart misgave him, and taking the price, set off to return home.

Presently, he found the Christian walking behind him; so he said to him, 'O Nazarene, why dost thou follow me?' 'O my lord,' answered the other, 'I have a need at the end of the street, may God never bring thee to need!' Ali went on, but, as he came to the door of his house, the Christian overtook him; so he said to him, 'O accursed one, what ails thee to follow me wherever I go?' 'O my lord,' replied the other, 'give me a draught of water, for I am athirst; and with God the Most High be thy reward!' Quoth Ali in himself, 'Verily, this man is a tributary [of the Khalifate] and seeks a draught of water of me; by Allah, I will not disappoint him!' So he entered the house and took a mug of water; but Zumurrud saw him and said to him, 'O my love, hast thou sold the curtain?' 'Yes,' answered he. 'To a merchant or a passer-by?' asked she. 'For my heart forethinketh me of separation.' 'To a merchant, of course,' replied he. But she rejoined, 'Tell me the truth of the case, that I may order my affair; and what wantest thou with the mug of water?' 'To give the broker to drink,' answered he; whereupon she exclaimed, 'There is no power and no virtue but in God the Most High, the Supreme!' And repeated the following verses:

O that that Christian gave thee  
 And that he had not  
 So much as a drink, there is death And no more of thee  
 And no more of thee

Then he took the mug and going out, bawled the Christian with a fair rebuff and said to him, 'O dog, how dost thou enter my house without my leave?' 'O my lord,' answered he, 'there is no difference between the door and the vestibule and I will not budge hence, save to go out; and I am beholden to thee for thy kindness.' Then he took the mug and emptying it, returned it to Ali, who took it and waited for him to go; but he did not move. So Ali said to him, 'Why dost thou not rise and go thy way?' 'O my lord,' answered the Christian, 'be not of those that do a kindness and after make a reproach of it, nor of those of whom saith the poet:

Gone, gone are they who, if thou stoodst before their door of old, Had,  
 at thy seeking, handselled thee with benefits untold!  
 And if thou stoodst at their door who follow after them, These latter  
 would begrudge to thee a draught of water cold.

O my lord,' continued he, 'I have drunk, and now I would have thee give me to eat of whatever is in the house, though it be but a crust of bread or a biscuit and an onion.' 'Begone, without more talk,' replied Ali; 'there is nothing in the house.' 'O my lord,' insisted the Christian, 'if there be nothing in the house, take these hundred dinars and fetch us somewhat from the market, if but a cake of bread, that bread and salt may pass between us.' With this, quoth Ali to himself, 'This Christian is surely mad; I will take the hundred dinars and bring somewhat worth a couple of dirhems and laugh at him.' 'O my lord,' added the Christian, 'I want but somewhat to stay my hunger, were it but a cake of dry bread and an onion; for the best food is that which does away hunger, not rich meats; and how well saith the poet:

A cake of dry stale bread will hunger out to flight : Why then are grief  
and care so heavy on my spright :  
Death is, indeed, most just, since, with an equal hand, Khalif and  
beggar-wretch, impartial, it doth smite.'

Then said Ali, 'Wait here, whilst I lock the saloon and fetch thee somewhat from the market.' 'I hear and obey,' said the Christian. So Ali shut up the saloon and locking the door with a padlock, put the key in his pocket: after which he repaired to the market and bought fried cheese and virgin honey and bananas and bread, with which he returned to the Christian. When the latter saw this, he said, 'O my lord, this is [too] much; thou hast brought enough for half a score men and I am alone; but belike thou wilt eat with me.' 'Eat by thyself,' replied Ali; 'I am full.' 'O my lord,' rejoined the Christian, 'the wise say, "He who eats not with his guest is a base-born churl."'

When Ali heard this, he sat down and ate a little with him, after which he would have held his hand: but [whilst **Night** he was not looking] the Christian took a banana and **ccxix.** peeled it, then, splitting it in twain, put into one half concentrated henbane, mixed with opium, a drachm whereof would overthrow an elephant. This half he dipped in the honey and gave to Ali Shar, saying, 'O my lord, I swear by thy religion that thou shalt take this.' Ali was ashamed to make him forsworn; so he took the half banana and swallowed it; but hardly had it reached his stomach, when his head fell down in front of his feet and he was as though he had been a year asleep.

When the Nazarene saw this, he rose, as he had been a bald wolf or a baited cat, and taking the saloon key, made off at a run, leaving Ali Shar prostrate. Now this Christian was the brother of the decrepit old man who thought to buy Zunnurud for a thousand dinars, but she would none of him and flouted him in verse. He was an

infidel at heart, though a Muslim in outward show, and called himself Reshideddin;<sup>1</sup> and when Zalmurud mocked him and would not accept of him to be lord, he complained to his brother, the aforesaid Christian, Derwin by name, who said to him, 'Fret not thyself about this affair; for I will make shift to get her for thee, without paying a penny.'

Now he was a skillful sorcerer, crafty and wicked; so he watched his time and played Ali Shar the trick aforesaid. Then, taking the key, he went to his brother and told him what had passed, whereupon Reshideddin mounted his mule and repaired with his servants to Ali Shar's house, taking with him a purse of a thousand dinars, wherewith to bribe the master of police, should he meet him. He unlocked the saloon door, and the men who were with him rushed in upon Zalmurud and seized her, threatening her with death, if she spoke; but they left the house as it was and took nothing therefrom. Moreover, they laid the key by Ali's side and leaving him lying in the vestibule, shut the door on him and went away. The Christian carried the girl to his own house and setting her amongst his women and concubines, said to her, 'O strumpet, I am the old man, whom thou didst reject and lampoon; but now I have thee, without paying a penny.' 'God requite thee, O wicked old man,' replied she, with her eyes full of tears, 'for sundering my lord and me!' 'Wanton doxy that thou art,' rejoined he, 'thou shalt see how I will punish thee! By the virtue of the Messiah and the Virgin, except thou obey me and embrace my faith, I will torture thee with all manner of torture!' 'By Allah,' answered she, 'though thou cut me in pieces, I will not forswear the faith of Islam! It may be God the Most High will bring me speedy relief, for He is all-powerful, and the wise say, "Better hurt in body than in religion."'

<sup>1</sup> i.e. Orthodox.

Thereupon the old man called out to his eunuchs and women, saying, 'Throw her down!' So they threw her down and he beat her grievously, whilst she cried in vain for help, but presently stinted and fell to saying, 'God is my sufficiency, and He is indeed sufficient!' till her breath failed her and she swooned away. When he had taken his fill of beating her, he said to the eunuchs, 'Drag her forth by the feet and cast her down in the kitchen, and give her nothing to eat.' They did his bidding, and on the morrow the accused old man sent for her and beat her again, after which he bade return her to her place. When the pain of the blows had subsided, she said, 'There is no god but God and Mohammed is His Apostle! God is my sufficiency and excellent is He in whom I put my trust!' And she called upon our lord Mohammed (whom God bless and preserve) for succour.

Night  
club.

Meanwhile, Ali Shar slept on till next day, when the fumes of the henbane quitted his brain and he awoke and cried out, 'O Zunurrud!' But none answered him. So he entered the saloon and found 'the air empty and the place of visitation distant ;'<sup>1</sup> whereby he knew that it was the Nazarene, who had played him this trick. And he wept and groaned and lamented and repeated the following verses :

O Fate, thou sparest not nor dost desist from me: Lo, for my soul is  
racked with dolour and despite!  
Have pity, O my lords, upon a slave laid low, Upon the rich made poor  
by love and its unright.  
What boots the archer's skill, if, when the foe draw near, His bowstring  
snap and leave him helpless in the fight?  
And when afflictions press and multiply on man, Ah, whither then shall  
he from destiny take flight?  
How straitly did I guard 'gainst severance of our loves! But, when as  
Fate descends, it blinds the keenest sight.

<sup>1</sup> These words are a quotation from a well-known piece of verse.

Then he sobbed and repeated these verses also :

Her traces on the encampment's sands a robe of grace bestow : The  
mourner yearneth to the place where she dwelt whiles ago.  
Towards her native land she turns ; a camp in her doth raise Longing,  
where the very ruins now are scattered to and fro.  
She stops and questions of the place ; but with the case's tongue it  
answers her, "There is no way to union, I trow.  
'Tis as the lost a levin were, that glittered on the camp awhile, then  
vanished and to thee appeareth nevermo'."

And he repented, whenas repentance availed him not,  
and wept and tore his clothes. Then he took two stones  
and went round about the city, beating his breast with the  
stones and crying out, 'O Zumurrud!' whilst the children  
flocked round him, calling out, 'A madman! A madman!' and  
all who knew him wept for him, saying, 'Youder is  
such an one; what hath befallen him?' Thus he did all  
that day, and when night darkened on him, he lay down  
in one of the by-streets and slept till morning. On the  
morrow, he went round about the city with the stones till  
eventide, when he returned to his house, to pass the night.  
One of his neighbours, a worthy old woman, saw him and  
said to him, 'God keep thee, O my son! How long hast  
thou been mad?' And he answered her with the follow-  
ing verse :

Quoth they, "Thou'rt surely mad for her thou lov'st;" and I replied,  
"Indeed the sweets of life belong unto the raving race.  
My madness leave and bring me her for whom ye say I'm mad ; And if  
she heal my madness, spare to blame me for my case."

Therewith she knew him for a lover who had lost his  
mistress and said, 'There is no power and no virtue but  
in God the Most High, the Supreme! O my son, I  
would have thee acquaint me with the particulars of thine  
affliction. Peradventure God may enable me to help thee  
against it, if it so please Him.' So he told her all that  
had happened and she said, 'O my son, indeed thou hast

excuse.' And her eyes ran over with tears and she repeated the following verses :

Torment, indeed, in this our world, true lovers do aby ; Hell shall not  
torture them, by God, who has they come to die !  
Of love they died and to the last their passion chaste-ly hid ; So are they  
martyrs, as, indeed, tradition,<sup>1</sup> testify.

Then she said, ' O my son, go now and buy me a basket, such as the jewel-hawkers carry, and stock it with rings and bracelets and earrings and other women's gear, and spare not money. Bring all this to me and I will set it on my head and go round about, in the guise of a huckstress, and make search for her in all the houses, till I light on news of her, if it be the will of God the Most High.' Ali rejoiced in her words and kissed her hands, then, going out, speedily returned with all she required ; whereupon she rose and donning a patched gown and a yellow veil, took a staff in her hand and set out, with the basket on her head.

She ceased not to go from quarter to quarter and street to street and house to house, till God the Most High led her to the house of the accursed Reshideddin the Nazarene. She heard groans within and knocked at the door. **Night**  
whereupon a slave-girl came down and opening the door **ccxxvi.**  
to her, saluted her. Quoth the old woman, ' I have these trifles for sale : is there any one with you who will buy aught of them ? ' ' Yes,' answered the girl and carrying her indoors, made her sit down ; whereupon all the women came round her and each bought something of her. She spoke them fair and was easy with them as to price, so that they rejoiced in her, because of her pleasant speech and easiness. Meanwhile, she looked about to see who it was she had heard groaning, till her eyes fell on Zainurrud, when she knew her and saw that she was laid prostrate. So she wept and said to the girls, ' O my children, how

<sup>1</sup> Of the Prophet.

comes yonder damsel in this plight?' And they told her what had passed, adding, 'Indeed the thing is not of our choice, but our master commanded us to do this, and he is now absent on a journey.' 'O my children,' said the old woman, 'I have a request to make of you, and it is that you loose this unhappy woman of her bonds, till you know of your lord's return, when do ye bind her again as she was; and you shall earn a reward from the Lord of all creatures.' 'We hear and obey,' answered they and loosing Zumurrud, gave her to eat and drink.

Then said the old woman, 'Would my leg had been broken, ere I entered your house!' And she went up to Zumurrud and said to her, 'O my daughter, take heart; God will surely bring thee relief.' Then she told her [privily] that she came from her lord Ali Shar and appointed her to be on the watch that night, saying, 'Thy lord will come to the bench under the gallery and whistle to thee; and when thou hearest him, do thou whistle back to him and let thyself down to him by a rope from the window, and he will take thee and go away.' Zumurrud thanked the old woman, and the latter returned to Ali Shar and told him what she had done, saying, 'Go to-night, at midnight, to such a quarter,—for the accursed fellow's house is there and its fashion is thus and thus. Stand under the window of the upper chamber and whistle; whereupon she will let herself down to thee; then do thou take her and carry her whither thou wilt.' He thanked her for her good offices and repeated the following verses, with the tears running down his cheeks:

Let censors cease to rail and chide and leave their idle prate: My body's  
wasted and my heart weary and desolate;  
And from desertion and distress my tears, by many a chain Of true  
traditions handed down, do trace their lineage straight.  
Thou that art whole of heart and free from that which I endure Of grief  
and care, cut short thy strife nor question of my state.

A sweet hoped maiden, soft of sides and moulded well of shape, With  
her soft speech my heart hath t'ien, ay, and my graceful maid  
My heart, since thou art gone, none knows nor my eyes do sleep, Nor  
can the hanger of my hopes itself with patience ease.

Yea, thou hast left me mortal, the hot age of desire, 'Twas thy eyes  
and that devilish smile, unconsoled.

As for the man, as a thing I know not nor will know; I have seen  
him into my thoughts' still enter, soon or late.

I have seen and I saw it tears and regretted these also.

My heart began to be with him, that I knew that you were come.

I have seen him with you to my heart was born.

When with thee I was with you for own, I have seen a heart  
that could not be so far away in piece of time.

He waited till the appointed time, then went to the  
street, where was the Christian's house, and recognizing  
it from the old woman's description, sat down on the  
bench under the gallery. Presently drowsiness overcame  
him, for it was long since he had slept, for the violence of  
his passion, and he became as one drunken with sleep,  
worthy to Him who sleepeth not!

Meanwhile, concealed there a certain thief, who had **Night**  
come out that night to steal somewhat and prowled about **it**  
the skirts of the city, till he happened on Reshid-oddin's  
house. He went round about it, but found no way of  
climbing up into it and presently came to the bench  
where he found Ali Shir asleep and took his turban. At  
that moment, Zurrud looked out and seeing the thief  
standing in the darkness, took him for her lord; so she  
whistled to him and he whistled back to her, whereupon  
she let herself down to him, with a pair of saddle-bags full  
of gold. When the robber saw this, he said to himself  
'This is a strange thing, and there must needs be some  
extraordinary cause to it.' Then, snatching up the saddle-  
bags, he took Zurrud on his shoulders and made off  
with both like the blinding lightning.

Quoth she, 'The old woman told me that thou wast

weak with illness on my account : and behold, thou art stronger than a horse.' He made her no reply ; so she put her hand to his face and felt a beard like a bath-broom,<sup>1</sup> as he were a hog that had swallowed feathers and they had come out at his gullet ; whereat she took fright and said to him, ' Wh t art thou ? ' ' O strumpet,' answered he, ' I am the shaper Jewan the Kurd, of the band of Ahmed ed Denef ; we are forty sharpers, who will all tilt at thy tail this night, from dusk to dawn.' When she heard his words, she wept and buffeted her face, knowing that Fate had gotten the better of her and that there was nothing for it but to put her trust in God the Most High. So she took patience and submitted herself to the ordinance of God, saying, ' There is no god but God ! As often as we escape from one trouble, we fall into a worse.'

Now the manner of Jewan's coming thither was thus : he had said to Ahmed ed Denef, ' O captain, I have been here before and know a cavern without the town, that will hold forty souls ; so I will go before you thither and set my mother therein. Then will I enter the city and steal somewhat on your account and keep it till you come ; so shall you be my guests this day.' ' Do what thou wilt,' replied Ahmed. So Jewan forewent them to the cavern and left his mother there ; but, as he came out, he found a trooper lying asleep, with his horse tethered beside him ; so he slew him and taking his clothes and arms, hid them with his mother in the cave, where also he tied up the horse. Then he betook himself to the city and prowled about, till he happened on the Christian's house and did with Ali Shar and Zumurrud as we have said. He ceased not to run, with Zumurrud on his back, till he came to the cavern, where he gave her in charge of his mother, saying, ' Keep watch over her till I come back to thee at point of day,' and went away.

<sup>1</sup> Usually made of palm-fibres.

Meanwhile Zumurrudd said to herself, 'Now is the time to cast about for a means of escape. If I wait till these forty men come, they will take their turns at me, till they make me like a water-logged ship.' Then she turned to the old woman and said to her, 'O my aunt, wilt thou not come without the cave, that I may house thee in the sun?' 'Ay, by Allah, O my daughter!' replied the old woman.

This long time have I been out of reach of the bath; for these hogs cease not to hale me from place to place.' So they went without the cavern, and Zumurrudd combed out the old woman's hair and killed the vermin in her head till this soothed her and she fell asleep; whereupon Zumurrudd arose and donning the clothes of the murdered trooper, girt herself with his sword and covered her head with his turban, so that she became as she were a man. Then she took the saddle-bags full of gold and mounted the horse, saying in herself 'O kind Protector, I adjure thee by the glory of Mohammed, (whom God bless and preserve,) protect me! If I enter the city, belike one of the trooper's folk will see me, and no good will befall me.' So she turned her back on the city and rode forth into the desert.

She fared on ten days, eating of the fruits of the earth and drinking of its waters, she and her horse; and on the eleventh day, she came in sight of a pleasant and safe city, established in good; the season of winter had departed from it with its cold and the spring-tide came to it with its roses and orange-blossoms; its flowers blew bright, its streams welled forth and its birds warbled. As she drew near, she saw the troops and Amirs and notables of the place drawn up before the gate, at which she marvelled and said to herself, 'The people of the city are all collected at the gate: there must needs be a reason for this.' Then she made towards them; but, as she drew near, the troops hastened forward to meet her and dismounting, kissed the

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ground before her and said, 'God aid thee, O our lord the Sultan!'

Then the grandees ranked themselves before her, whilst the troops ranged the people in order, saying, 'God aid thee and make thy coming a blessing to the Muslims, O Sultan of all men! God strengthen thee, O king of the age and pearl of the day and the time!' 'What ails you, O people of the city?' asked Zumurrud; and the chamberlain answered, 'Verily, He who is no niggard in giving hath been bountiful to thee and hath made thee Sultan of this city and ruler over the necks of all that are therein; for know that it is the custom of the citizens, when their king dies, leaving no son, that the troops should sally forth of the place and abide there three days; and whoever cometh from the quarter whence thou hast come, they make him king over them. So praised be God who hath sent us a well-favoured man of the sons of the Turks; for had a lesser than thou presented himself, he had been Sultan.'

Now Zumurrud was well-advised in all she did; so she said, 'Think not that I am of the common folk of the Turks; nay, I am a man of condition; but I was wroth with my family, so I went forth and left them. See these saddle-bags full of gold I brought with me, that I might give alms thereof to the poor and needy by the way.' So they called down blessings upon her and rejoiced in her with an exceeding joy and she also rejoiced in them and Night said in herself, 'Now that I have attained to this estate, it may be God will reunite me with my lord in this place, for He can do what He will.' Then the troops escorted her to the city and dismounting, walked before her to the palace. Here she alighted and the Amirs and grandees, taking her under the armpits, carried her into the palace and seated her on the throne; after which they all kissed the ground before her. Then she bade open the treasuries

and gave largesse to the troops, who offered up prayers for the continuance of her reign, and all the townsfolk and the people of the kingdom accepted her rule.

She abode thus awhile, ordering and forbidding, and remitted taxes and released prisoners and redressed grievances, so that all the people came to hold her in exceeding reverence and to love her, by reason of her generosity and continence; but, as often as she bethought her of her lord, she wept and besought God to reunite them; and one night, as she was thinking of him and calling to mind the days she had passed with him, her eyes ran over with tears and she repeated the following verses:

My longing, 'spite of time, for thee is ever new; My weeping wends  
my lids and tears on tearful dew.

Whenas I weep, I weep for anguish of desire; For grievous severance  
is a lover's heart unto.

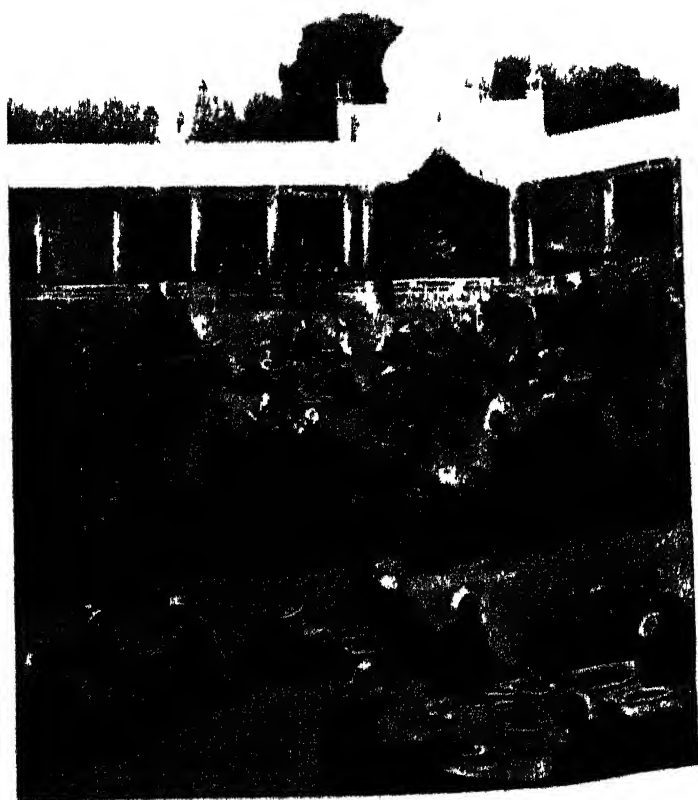
Then she wiped away her tears and rising, betook herself to the harem, where she appointed to the slave-girls and concubines separate lodgings and assigned them pensions and allowances, giving out that she was minded to live apart and devote herself to works of piety. So she betook herself to fasting and praying, till the Amirs said, 'Verily, this Sultan is exceeding devout' Nor would she suffer any attendants about her, save two little eunuchs, to serve her.

She held the throne thus a whole year, during which time she heard no news of Ali Shar, and this was exceedingly grievous to her; so, when her distress became excessive, she summoned her Viziers and chamberlains and bid them fetch architects and builders and make her a tilting ground, a parasang long and the like broad, in front of the palace. They hastened to do her bidding, and when the place was completed to her liking, she went down into it and they pitched her there a great pavilion.

wherein the chairs of the Amirs were set in their order. Then she bade spread in the tilting-ground tables with all manner rich meats and ordered the grandees to eat. So they ate and she said to them 'It is my will that, on the first day of each month, ye do on this wise and proclaim in the city that none shall open his shop, but that all the people shall come and eat of the king's banquet, and that whoso disobeyeth shall be hanged over his own door.'

They did as she bade them, and when came the first day of the next month, Zumurrud went down into the tilting-ground and the crier proclaimed aloud, saying, 'Ho, all ye people, great and small, whoso openeth shop or house or magazine shall straightway be hanged over his own door; for it behoves you all to come and eat of the king's banquet' Then they laid the tables and the people came in troops: so she bade them sit down at the tables and eat their fill of all the dishes. So they sat down and she sat on her chair of estate, watching them, whilst each thought she was looking at none but him. Then they fell to eating and the Amirs said to them, 'Eat and be not ashamed; for this is pleasing to the King.' So they ate their fill and went away, blessing the King and saying, one to the other, 'Never saw we a Sultan that loved the poor Night as doth this Sultan.' And they wished her length of life, whilst Zumurrud returned to the palace, rejoicing in her device and saying in herself, 'If it please God the Most High, I shall surely by this means happen on news of my lord Ali Shar.'

When the first day of the second month came round, she made the banquet as before and the folk came and sat down at the tables, company by company and one by one. As she sat on her throne, at the head of the tables, watching the people eat, her eye fell on Bersoum, the Nazarene who had bought the curtain of Ali Shar; and she knew him and said in herself, 'This is the first of my





solace and of the accomplishment of my desire.' Bersoum came up to the table and sitting down with the rest to eat, espied a dish of sweet rice, sprinkled with sugar; but it was far from him. So he put out up to it and putting out his hand to it, took it and set it before himself. His next neighbour said to him, 'Why dost thou not eat of what is before thee? Art thou not ashamed to reach over for a dish that is distant from thee?' Quoth the room, 'I will eat of none but this dish.' 'Fit it then,' rejoined the other, 'and small good may it do thee!' But another man, a hashish eater, said, 'Let him eat of it, that I have set before him.' 'O unluckiest of hashish-eaters,' rejoined the first speaker, 'this is no meat for thee, it is eating for Amal. Let it be, that it may return to those for whom it is meant and they eat it.'

But Bersoum heeded him not and taking, his hand to the rice, took a mouthful and put it in his mouth. He was about to take a second mouthful, when Zimmrud, who was watching him, cried out to certain of her guards, saying, 'Bring me yonder man with the dish of sweet rice before him and let him not eat the mouthful he had ready, but throw it from his hand.' So four of the guards went up to Bersoum and throwing the mouthful of rice from his hand, baled him to throw it before Zimmrud, whilst all the people left eating and said to one another, 'By Allah, he did wrong in not eating of the food meant for the like of him.' 'For me,' quoth one, 'I was content with this trumery that is before me.' And the hashish-eater said, 'Praised be God who hindered me from eating of the dish of sweet rice, for I looked for it to stand before him and was only waiting for him to have stayed his hunger of it, to eat with him, when there befell him what we see.' And they said, one to another, 'Wait till we see what befalls him.'

Then said Zimmrud to Bersoum, 'Out on thee, O blue

eyes. 'What is thy name and why comest thou hither?' But the accursed fellow in collect himself,aving a white turban,<sup>1</sup> and answered, 'O King, my name is Ali; I am a weaver and came hither to trade.' 'Bring me a table of sand and a pen of brass,' quoth Zumurrud, and they brought her what she sought. She levelled the sand and taking the pen, drew a geomantic figure, in the likeness of an eagle; then, raising her head, she considered Bersoum straight and said to him, 'O dog, how darest thou lie to kings? Art thou not a Nazarene, Bersoum by name, and comest thou not hither in quest of somewhat? Speak the truth, or, by the splendour of the Deity, I will strike off thy head?' At this, Bersoum was confounded and the Amirs and bystanders said, 'Verily, the King understands geomancy: blessed be He who hath gifted him!' Then Zumurrud cried out upon Bersoum and said, 'Tell me the truth, or I will make an end of thee!' 'Pardon, O King Night of the age,' replied Bersoum; 'the table hath told thee cccxi. aright; thy slave is indeed a Nazarene.' Whereupon all present wondered at the King's skill in geomancy, saying, 'Verily, the King is a diviner, whose like there is not in the world.'

Then Zumurrud bade flay the Christian and stuff his skin with straw and hang it over the gate of the tilting-ground. Moreover, she commanded to dig a pit without the city and burn his flesh and bones therein and throw over his ashes offal and rubbish. 'We hear and obey,' answered they and did with him as she bade. When the people saw what had befallen the Christian, they said, 'He hath his deserts; but what an unlucky mouthful was that for him!' And another said, 'Be my wife triply divorced if ever I eat of sweet rice as long as I live!' 'Praised be God,' quoth the hashish-eater, 'who saved me from this fellow's fate by hindering me from eating of

<sup>1</sup> The distinctive headdress of the Muslims.

the rice !' Then they all went out, minded thenceforth to leave sitting in the Christian's place, over against the dish of sweet rice.

When the first day of the third month came, they bid the trades as of wont, and Queen Zumurrud came down and sat on her throne, with her guards in attendance on her, fearing her danger. Then the town-folk entered, as usual, and went round about the table, looking for the place of the dish of sweet rice, and quoth one to another, 'Hark ye, Hye! Khalef!' 'At thy service, O Hajji Khalef,' answered the other. 'Avert the dish of sweet rice,' said Khalid, 'and let them eat not thereof; for if thou do, thou wilt be hanged.' Then they sat down to meat; and as they were eating, Zumurrud chanced to look at the gate of the tilting-ground and saw a man come running in. So she considered him and knew him for Jewan the Kurd.

Now the manner of his coming was on this wise. When he left his mother, he went to his comrades and said to them, 'I had fine purchase yesterday; for I slew a trooper and took his horse. Moreover there fell to me last night a pair of saddle-bags, full of gold, and a girl worth more than the money; and I have left them all with my mother in the cave.' At this they rejoiced and repaired to the cavern at nightfall, whilst he forewent them, that he might fetch them the booty. But he found the place empty and questioned his mother, who told him what had befallen whereupon he bit his hands for despite and exclaimed,

By Allah, I will make search for yonder harlot and take her, wherever she is, though it be in the shell of a pistachio nut, and quench my malice on her !' So he went forth in quest of her and journeyed from place to place, till he came to Queen Zumurrud's city. He found the town deserted and enquiring of some women whom he saw looking from the windows, learnt that it was the Sultan's custom to make a banquet for all the people on the first of each

month and was directed to the tilting-ground, where the feast was spread.

So he came running in and finding no place empty, save that before the dish of sweet rice, took his seat there and put out his hand to the dish; whereupon the folk cried out to him, saying, 'O brother, what wilt thou do?' Quoth he, 'I mean to eat my fill of this dish.' 'If thou eat of it,' rejoined one of the people, 'thou wilt assuredly be hanged.' But Jewan said, 'Hold thy peace and talk not thus.' Then he stretched out his hand to the dish aforesaid and drew it to him.

Night  
cccxii.

Now the hashish-eater, of whom we have before spoken, was sitting by him; but when he saw him do this, the fumes of the hashish left his head and he fled from his place and sat down afar off, saying, 'I will have nothing to do with yonder dish.' Then Jewan put out his hand, as it were a crow's foot, and dipping it in the dish, scooped up therewith half the dishful and drew it out, as it were a camel's hoof, and the bottom of the dish appeared. He rolled the rice in his hand, till it was like a great orange, and threw it ravenously into his mouth; and it rolled down his gullet, with a noise like thunder. 'Praised be God,' quoth his neighbour, 'who hath not made me meat before thee; for thou hast emptied the dish at one mouthful.' 'Let him eat,' said the hashish-eater; 'methinks he hath a gallows-face.' Then, turning to Jewan, 'Eat,' added he, 'and small good may it do thee!'

Jewan put out his hand again and taking another mouthful, was rolling it in his hands like the first, when Zumurrud cried out to the guards, saying, 'Bring me yonder man in haste and let him not eat the mouthful in his hand.' So they ran and seizing him, as he bent over the dish, brought him to her, whilst the people exulted over him and said, one to the other, 'He hath his deserts, for we warned him, but he would not take warning. Verily, this

place is fated to be the death of whoso sits therein, and yonder rice is fatal to all who eat of it.'

Then said Zumurrud to Jewan, 'What is thy name and condition and why comest thou hither?' 'O our lord the Sultan,' answered he, 'my name is Othman; I am a gardener and am come hither in quest of somewhat I have lost.' 'Bring me a table of sand,' said Zumurrud. So they brought it, and she took the pen and drawing a geomantic figure, considered it awhile, then raising her head, exclaimed, 'Out on thee, thou sorry knave! How darest thou lie to kings? This sand tells me that thy name is Jewan the Kurd and that thou art by trade a robber, taking men's goods in the way of unright and slaying those whom God hath forbidden to slay, save for just cause.' And she cried out upon him, saying, 'O hog, tell me the truth of thy case or I will cut off thy head!'

When he heard this, he turned pale and his teeth chattered; then, deeming that he might save himself by telling the truth, he replied, 'O King, thou sayst sooth; but I repent at thy hands henceforth and turn to God the Most High!' Quoth she, 'I may not leave a pest in the way of the true-believers.' And she said to her guards, 'Take him and slay him and do with him as ye did by his like last month.' And they did her commandment. When the hashish-eater saw this, he turned his back upon the dish of rice, saying, 'It is unlawful to present my face to thee.' Then, when they had made an end of eating, they dispersed and Zumurrud returned to her palace and dismissed her attendants.

When the fourth month came round, they made the banquet, as of wont, and the folk sat awaiting leave to begin. Presently Zumurrud entered and sitting down on her throne, looked at the tables and saw that room for four people was left void before the dish of rice, at which she wondered. As she sat, looking around, she saw a man

came running in at the gate, who stayed not till he reached the tables and finding no room, save before the dish of rice, took his seat there. She looked at him and knowing him for the accursed Christian, who called himself Reshideddin, said in herself, 'How blessed is this device of the food, into whose toils this infidel hath fallen!'

Now the manner of his coming was extraordinary, and **Night** it was on this wise. When he returned from his journey, **ccxxiii.** the people of the house told him that Zumurrud was missing and with her a pair of saddle-bags full of gold; whereupon he rent his clothes and buffeted his face and plucked out his beard. Then he despatched his brother Bersoum in quest of her, and when he was weary of awaiting news of him, he went forth himself, to seek for him and for Zumurrud, and fate led him to the latter's city. He entered it on the first day of the month and finding the streets deserted and the shops shut, enquired of the women at the windows, who told him that the King made a banquet on the first of each month for the people, all of whom were bound to attend it, nor might any abide in his house or shop that day; and they directed him to the tilting-ground.

So he betook himself thither and sitting down before the rice, put out his hand to eat thereof, whereupon Zumurrud cried out to her guards, saying, 'Bring me him who sits before the dish of rice.' So they laid hands on him and brought him before Queen Zumurrud, who said to him, 'Out on thee! What is thy name and occupation, and what brings thee hither?' 'O King of the age,' answered he, 'my name is Rustem and I have no occupation, for I am a poor dervish.' Then said she to her attendants, 'Bring me table of sand and pen of brass.' So they brought her what she sought, as usual; and she took the pen and drawing a geomantic figure, considered it awhile, then raising her head to Reshideddin, said, 'O dog, how darest

thou lie to kings? Thy name is Reshideddin the Nazarene; thou art outwardly a Muslim, but a Christian at heart, and thine occupation is to lay snares for the slave-girls of the Muslims and take them. Speak the truth, or I will smite off thy head.' He hesitated and stammered, then replied, 'Thou sayest sooth, O King of the age!' Whereupon she commanded to throw him down and give him a hundred blows on each sole and a thousand on his body; after which she bade flay him and stuff his skin with hards of flax and dig a pit without the city, wherein they should burn his body and cast dirt and rubbish on his ashes. They did as she bade them and she gave the people leave to eat.

So they ate their fill and went their ways, whilst Zummurud returned to her palace, thanking God for that He had solaced her heart of those who had wronged her. Then she praised the Creator of heaven and earth and repeated the following verses:

Lo, these erst had power and used it with oppression and unright! In a little, their dominion was as if it ne'er had been.

Had they used their power with justice, they had been repaid the like;  
But they wrought unright and Fortune guerdoned them with dole and teen.

So they perished and the moral of the case bespeaks them thus, "This is what your crimes have earned you: Fate is not to blame, I ween."

Then she called to mind her lord Ali Shar and wept, but presently recovered herself and said, 'Surely God, who hath given mine enemies into my hand, will vouchsafe me speedy reunion with my beloved; for He can do what He will and is generous to His servants and mindful of their case!' Then she praised God (to whom belong might and majesty) and besought forgiveness of Him, submitting herself to the course of destiny, assured that to each beginning there is an end, and repeating the saying of the poet:

Night  
ccxxix.

Peace to thee, for all things' destiny I in His hand who fashioned  
 thee; of Him no torriden shall befall Nor aught of Him appointed fall  
 to thee.

And what another saith:

Let thy peace be thy light, and fare, And enter thou not the house of  
 sorrow;  
 For when the peace is a thing is hard, The next now brings us to  
 our care.

And a third:

Be not that time thou'rt a new toger in despite And patient is  
 there for misfortune on thy head.  
 Indeed the night is quick and great with child by Time And of all  
 wondrous things are hourly brought to bed.

And a fourth:

Take patience, for therein is good; an thou be learn'd in it, Thou shalt  
 be calm of soul nor drink of anguish any whit.  
 And know that if, with a good grace, thou do not thee submit, Yet  
 must thou suffer, will or nill, that which the Pen hath writ.

She abode thus another whole month's space, judging  
 the folk and commanding and forbidding by day, and by  
 night weeping and bewailing her separation from her lord  
 Ali Shar. On the first day of the fifth month, she bade  
 spread the banquet as usual and sat down at the head of  
 the tables, whilst the people awaited the signal to fall to,  
 leaving the place before the dish of rice vacant. She sat  
 with eyes fixed upon the gate of the tilting-ground, noting  
 all who entered and saying, 'O Thou that restoredst Joseph  
 to Jacob and didst away the affliction of Job, vouchsafe of  
 Thy power and greatness to restore me my lord Ali Shar;  
 for Thou canst all things! O Lord of all creatures, O  
 Guide of the erring, O Hearer of those that cry, O An-  
 swerer of prayer, answer Thou my prayer, O Lord of all  
 creatures!'

Hardly had she made an end of her prayer, when she

On entering the gate a young man, of the like of  
willow wand, the colour and countenance of  
youths, gave that his face was slow and his to his  
He came up to the gate and then he went  
before the chief of the, sat down and when he  
merrill's heart fluttered and observed his manner,  
knew him for her brother Xi Sheng and was like to  
tried out of his mind to stand and then he  
before the fall of the day were the first to be  
loaded, but she could not find it with her hand.

Now the man who had been with him, the  
When he awoke and found himself lying on the  
outside the old man's house, with his head on the  
but some one had come up on him and he was  
man, what he felt. So he spoke the words  
who said that never he returned, that is to say  
Verily, we are all dead to him we return and go  
back to the old man's house, knocked at the door. She  
came out and he went before her, till he was  
When he came to himself, he told her all that had passed,  
and she blamed him and chided him for his heedlessness,  
saying, 'Thou hast but thyself to thank for thine affliction  
and calamity.' And she gave not over reproaching him  
till the blood streamed from his nostrils and he again  
fainted away. When he revived, he saw her weeping over him; so he blamed himself and repeated the following  
verses:

How bitter is parting to friends, and how sweet Reunion to lovers;  
severance that sigh!

May God all unite them and watch over me, For I'm of their number  
and like for to die.

The old woman mourned over him and said to him,  
'Sit here, whilst I go in quest of news and return to thee  
in haste.' 'I hear and obey,' answered he. So she left  
him and was absent till midday, when she returned and

‘*Alas, I fear me thou must die in thy grief ;  
 And wilt thou see thy beloved again save on Es Sirat ;*<sup>1</sup>  
 For the people of the Christian’s house, when they arose  
 In the morning, found the widow giving on the garden  
 Broth upon <sup>her</sup> Zamarid mashing, and with her a pair of  
 small bags, full of the Christian’s money. When I came  
 thither, I found the Master of Police and his officers stand-  
 ing at the door, and there is no power and no virtue save  
 in the Most High, the Supreme !’

When he heard this, the light in his eyes was changed  
 to darkness and he despaired of life and made sure of  
 death ; nor did he leave weeping, till he lost his senses.  
 When he recovered, love and longing were sore upon  
 him ; there befell him a grievous sickness and he kept his  
 house a whole year ; during which time the old woman  
 ceased not to bring him doctors and ply him with diet-  
 drinks and make him broths, till his life returned to him.  
 Then he recalled what had passed and repeated the fol-  
 lowing verses :

*Union is parted ; in its stead, of grief I am possessed : My tears flow  
 still, my heart’s on fire for yearning and unrest.*

*Longing rends on a wight who hath no peace, so sore Of love and  
 wakefulness and pain he’s wasted and oppressed.*

*Lord, I beseech Thee, if there be relief for me in aught, Vouchsafe it,  
 whilst a spark of life abideth in my breast.*

When the second year began, the old woman said to  
 him, ‘O my son, all this thy sadness and sorrowing will  
 not bring thee back thy mistress. Rise, therefore, take  
 heart and seek for her in the lands : haply thou shalt light  
 on some news of her.’ And she ceased not to exhort and  
 encourage him, till he took heart and she carried him to  
 the bath. Then she made him drink wine and eat fowls,  
 and thus she did with him for a whole month, till he re-

<sup>1</sup> The bridge that spans Hell, finer than a hair and sharper than a  
 sword, and over which all must pass on the Day of Judgment.

gained strength and setting out, journeyed without ceasing till he arrived at Zumurrud's city, when he went to the sitting-ground and sat down before the dish of sweet rice, put out his hand to eat of it.

When the folk saw this, they were concerned for him and said to him, 'O young man, beware of that dish, for whoso eats thereof, misfortune befalls him.' 'Have ye to eat of it,' answered he, 'and let it be sold with me as they bid, so that I may be at rest from this weary life.' Then he ate a first morsel, and Zumurrud was roused to have him brought to her; but before she could reach him he was unbungred and said in her ear, 'It were well to let him eat his fill.' So he went on eating, whilst the people looked on in astonishment, waiting to see what would befall him: and when he had done, Zumurrud said to certain of her eunuchs, 'Go to yonder vendors that extol of the rice and bring him to me on courteous wise, saying, "The King would have speech of thee on some important matter." 'We hear and obey,' answered they and went up to Ali Shar, said to him, 'O my lord, the King desires the favour of a word with thee, and let thy heart be easy.' 'I hear and obey,' replied he and followed the eunuchs, who carried him **Night** before Zumurrud, whilst the people said to one another, **xxxxi** 'There is no power and no virtue save in God the Most High, the Supreme! I wonder what the King will do with him!' And others said, 'He will do him nought but good; for, were he minded to harm him, he had not suffered him to eat his fill.'

When he came before Zumurrud, he saluted and kissed the earth before her, whilst she returned his greeting and received him with honour. Then said she to him 'What is thy name and condition and what brought thee hither?' 'O King,' answered he, 'my name is Ali Shar, I am of the sons of the merchants of Khorassan and the object of my coming hither is to seek for a slave girl whom I

'Let it for she was dearer to me than my sight and  
 my crown,' and he laid my cold claves to her, since I  
 could not live without thee sooned away. She caused  
 her own robe to be on his face, that he came to himself,  
 and she said, 'Give me the table of sand and the pen'  
 and they brought them and she took the pen and drew  
 a number of words which she considered awhile; then,  
 I have just given sooth,' quoth she. 'God will grant  
 thee speedy return on with her, so be not troubled. Then  
 he bade her chamberlain carry him to the bath and after  
 bathed him in a handsome suit of royal apparel, and mount  
 him on one of the best of the King's horses and bring him  
 to the palace at end of day. So the chamberlain took him  
 away, whilst the folk said to one another, 'What make  
 the King deal thus courteously with yonder youth?' And  
 one said, 'Did I not tell you that he would do him no  
 hurt? For he is fair of aspect, and this I knew, when  
 the King suffered him to eat his fill.' And each said his  
 say, after which they all dispersed and went their ways.

As for Zaminrud, she thought the night would never  
 come, that she might be alone with the beloved of her  
 heart. As soon as it was dusk, she withdrew to her sleep-  
 ing chamber and made as she were overcome with sleep,  
 and it was her wont to suffer none to pass the night with  
 her, save the two little eunuchs that waited upon her.  
 After a little, she sent for Ali Shar and sat down upon the  
 bed, with candles burning at her head and feet and the  
 place lighted with hanging lamps of gold that shone like  
 the sun. When the people heard of her sending for Ali  
 Shar, they marvelled and said, 'Alas, the King  
 ennobled of this young man, and to-morrow he will  
 make him commander of the troops.' And each thought  
 his thought and said his say. When they brought him in  
 to her, he kissed the earth before her and called down  
 blessings on her, and she said in herself, 'Needs must I

staid him awhile ere I may see my own country.  
Then said she to him 'O Ah! hast thou been to the  
bath?' 'Yes, O my lord' answered he. 'Come eat of  
this fowl and meat and drink of this wine and sherbet  
of sugar,' said she, for thou art weary and thou come  
hither.' 'I hear and obey,' replied he and did as she  
bade him.

When he had made an end of eating and drinking  
said to him, 'Come up with me on the couch and rub my  
feet.' So he fell to rubbing her feet and legs and found  
them softer than silk. Then said she, 'Go hit her with  
rubbing,' and he 'Pardon me, O my lord, I will not go  
higher than the knee.' Whereupon, 'Wilt thou smite  
me?' quoth she. 'It shall be as thou comeneth for thee.  
Nay, but it behoves thee to do my bidding and I will make  
thee my minion and appoint thee one of my Amirs.' And  
in what must I do thy bidding, O King of the age? replied  
Ali. 'Put off thy trousers,' answered she, 'and lie down  
on thy face.' Quoth he, 'If it is a thing I never in my  
life did, and if thou force me thereto, I will accuse thee  
thereof before God on the Day of Resurrection. Take up  
thou hast given me and let me go to my own city.' And  
he wept and lamented. But she said, 'Put off thy trousers  
and lie down on thy face, or I will strike off thy head.'  
So he did as she bade him and she mounted upon his  
back. And he felt what was softer than silk and fresher  
than cream and said in himself, 'Of a truth, this King is  
better than all the women.'

She abode awhile on his back then turned over on to  
the ground, and he said [in himself], 'Praised be God! it  
seems his yard is not in point.' Then said she, 'O Ali,  
it is of the wont of my yard that it smiteth not on one,  
except it be rubbed with the hand, so, come, rub it with  
thy hand, till it be in point, else will I kill thee.' So  
saying, she lay down on her back and taking his hand set

it to her knee, and he found it a kaze softer than silk, white, plump and great, resembling for heat the hot room of the bath or the heart of a lover, whom passion hath wasted. Quoth Ali in himself, 'Verily, this King hath a kaze. This is a wonder of wonders!' And desire got hold on him and his yard stood on end to the utmost; which when Zumurrud saw, she burst out laughing and said to him, 'O my lord, all this betideth and yet thou knowest me not!' 'And who art thou, O King?' asked he; and she said, 'I am thy slave-girl Zumurrud.'

When he knew this and was certified that she was indeed his very slave-girl Zumurrud, he threw himself upon her, as the lion upon the sheep, and kissed her and embraced her. Then he thrust his yard into her poke and stinted not to play the porter at her door and the Imam<sup>1</sup> at her prayer-niche, whilst she with him ceased not from inclination and prostration and rising up and sitting down,<sup>2</sup> accompanying her canticles of praise<sup>3</sup> with motitations and other amorous gestures, till the [two little] eunuchs [afore-said] heard [the noise]. So they came and peeping out from behind the curtains, saw the King lying [on his back] and Ali Shar upon him, thrusting and thronging amain, whilst she puffed and blew and wriggled. Quoth they, 'This is no man's wriggle: belike this King is a woman.' But they concealed their affair and discovered it to none.

On the morrow, Zumurrud summoned all the troops and the grandees of the realm and said to them, 'I am minded to journey to this man's country; so choose you a deputy, who shall rule over you, till I return to you.' And they

<sup>1</sup> Or leader of the people at prayer, who stands opposite the niche sunk into or painted on the wall of the mosque, to indicate the direction of Mecca.

<sup>2</sup> All this is an audacious parody of the Muslim ritual of prayer.

<sup>3</sup> *Zu.* "exclamations of 'Glory be to God!'" which are of frequent recurrence in the Mohammedan formulas of prayer. See last note.

answered, 'We hear and obey.' Then she applied herself to making ready for the journey and furnished herself with victual and treasure and camels and mules and so forth, after which she set out with Ali Shar, and they fared on, till they arrived at his native place, where he entered his house and gave alms and largesse. God vouchsafed him children by her, and they both lived the happiest of lives till there came to them the Destroyer of Delights and Sunderer of Companies. Glory be to God, the Etern without cease, and praised be He in every case!

#### THE LOVES OF JUBEIR BEN UMEIR AND THE LADY BUDOUR.

It is related that the Khalif Haroun er Reshid was restless one night and could not sleep; so that he ceased not to toss from side to side for very restlessness, till, growing weary of this, he called Mesrour and said to him, 'O Mesrour, look what may solace me of this my restlessness.' 'O Commander of the Faithful,' answered Mesrour, 'wilt thou walk in the garden of the palace and divert thyself with the sight of its flowers and gaze upon the stars and note the beauty of their ordinance and the moon among them, shining on the water?' 'O Mesrour,' replied the Khalif, 'my heart inclines not to aught of this.' 'O my lord,' continued Mesrour, 'there are in thy palace three hundred concubines, each of whom hath her separate lodging. Do thou bid each retire into her own apartment and then go thou about and divert thyself with gazing on them, without their knowledge.' 'O Mesrour,' answered Haroun, 'the palace is mine and the girls are my property: moreover, my soul inclineth not to aught of this.' 'O my lord,' said Mesrour, 'summon the doctors and sages and poets and bid them contend before thee in argument and recite verses and tell thee tales and

anecdotes.' 'My soul inclines not to aught of this,' answered the Khalif; and Mesrour said, 'O my lord, bid the minions and wits and boon-companions attend thee and divert thee with witty sallies.' 'O Mesrour,' replied the Khalif, 'indeed my soul inclineth not to aught of this.'

Night. 'Then, O my lord,' rejoined Mesrour, 'strike off my head :  
 exhibit. mayoe, that will dispel thine unease and do away the restlessness that is upon thee.'

At this the Khalif laughed and said, 'See which of the boon-companions is at the door.' So Mesrour went out and returning, said, 'O my lord, he who sits without is Ali ben Mensour of Damascus, the Wag.' Bring him to me,' quoth Haroun; and Mesrour went out and returned with Ibn Mensour, who said, on entering, 'Peace be on thee. O Commander of the Faithful!' The Khalif returned his salutation and said to him, 'O Ibn Mensour, tell us one of thy stories.' 'O Commander of the Faithful,' said the other, 'shall I tell thee what I have seen with my eyes or what I have only heard tell?' 'If thou have seen aught worth telling,' replied the Khalif, 'let us hear it; for report is not like eye-witness.' 'O Commander of the Faithful,' said Ibn Mensour, 'lend me thine ear and thy heart.' 'O Ibn Mensour,' answered the Khalif, 'behold, I am listening to thee with mine ears and looking at thee with mine eyes and attending to thee with my heart.'

'Know then, O Commander of the Faithful,' began Ibn Mensour, 'that I receive a yearly allowance from Mohammed ben Suleiman el Hashimi, Sultan<sup>1</sup> of Bassora; so I went to him, once upon a time, as usual, and found him about to ride out a-hunting. I saluted him, and he returned my salute and would have me mount and go a-hunting with him; but I said, "O my lord, I cannot ride; so do thou establish me in the guest-house and give thy chamberlains and officers charge over me." And he did so and departed

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* governor.

for the chase. His officers entreated me with the utmost honour and hospitality; but I said in myself, "By Allah, it is a strange thing that I should have used so long to come from Baghdad to Bassora, yet know no more of the town than from the palace to the garden and back again." When shall I find an occasion like this to view the different parts of Bassora? I will rise at once and walk forth alone and divert myself and digest what I have eaten."

So I donned my richest clothes and went out a-walking in Bassora. Now it is known to thee, O Commander of the Faithful, that it hath seventy streets, each seventy parasangs long of Irak measure; and I lost myself in its by-streets and thirst overcame me. Presently, as I went along, I came to a great door, on which were two rings of brass, with curtains of red brocade drawn before it. Over the door was a trellis, covered with a creeping vine, that hung down and shaded the doorway; and on either side the porch was a stone bench. I stood still, to gaze upon the place, and presently heard a sorrowful voice, proceeding from a mourning heart, warbling melodiously and chanting the following verses:

My body is become th' abode of sickness and dismay, By reason of a fawn, whose land and stead are far away.

O zephyr of the waste, that roused my pain in me, I pray, By God your Lord, to him, with whom my heart dwells, take your way.

And prithee chide him, so reproach may be on him, maybe.

And if to you he do incline and hearken, then make far Your speech and tidings unto him of lovers, 'twixt you, bear.

Yea, and vouchsafe to favour me with service debonair And unto him I love make known my case and my despair,

Saying, "What ails thy bounden slave that, for estrangement, she Should die without offence of her committed or despite Or disobedience or breach of plighted faith or slight

Or fraud or turning of her heart to other or unright?" And if he smile, with dulcet speech bespeak ye thus the wight:

"An thou thy company wouldst grant to her, 'twere well of thee;

For she for love of thee's distraught, as needs must be the case ; Her eyes are ever void of sleep ; she weeps and wails apace."  
 If he show favour and incline to grant the wished-for grace, 'Tis well and good ; but, if ye still read anger in his face,  
 Dissemble then with him and say, " We know her not, not we."

Quoth I to myself, " Verily, if the owner of this voice be fair, she unites beauty of person and eloquence and sweetness of voice." Then I drew near the door, and raising the curtain little by little, beheld a damsel, white as the moon, when it rises on its fourteenth night, with joined eyebrows and languorous eyelids, breasts like twin pomegranates and dainty lips like twin corn-marigolds,<sup>1</sup> mouth as it were Solomon's seal and teeth that sported with the reason of rhymester and proser, even as saith the poet :

O mouth of the beloved, who set thy pearls arow And eke with wine fulfilled thee and camomiles like snow,  
 And lent the morning-glory unto thy smile, and who Hath with a padlock sealed thee of rubies sweet of show?  
 Whoso but looks upon thee is mad for joy and pride. How should it fare with him, then, who kisseth thee, heigho !

And as saith another :

O pearls of the teeth of my love, Have ruth on cornelian and spare To vie with it ! Shall it not find You peerless and passing compare ?

In fine, she comprised all manner of loveliness and was a ravishment to men and women, nor could the beholder satisfy himself with the sight of her beauty ; for she was as the poet hath said of her :

<sup>1</sup> The word *ucwanek*, here used in the dual number, usually designates the teeth, in its common meaning of "camomile-flower" : but the lips are here expressly mentioned, and this fact, together with that of the substitution, in the Breslau edition, of the word *atikan* (two cornelians or rubies) for *ucwanek* (two camomiles), as in the Calcutta and Boulac editions, shows that the word is intended to be taken in its rarer meaning of "corn-marigold."

If face to face, she do appear, unveiled, she slays; and if She turn her back, she makes all men her lovers far and near.  
 Like the full moon and eke the sun she is, but cruelly And inhumanity belong not to her nature dear.  
 The garden-gates of Paradise are opened with her shift And the full moon revolveth still upon her neck-rings' sphere.

As I looked at her through the opening of the curtains, she turned and seeing me standing at the door, said to her maid, "See who stands at the door." So the maid came up to me and said. "O old man, hast thou no shame, or do gray hairs and impudence go together?" "O my mistress," answered I, "I confess to the gray hairs, but as for unmannerliness, I think not to be guilty of it." "And what can be more unmannerly," rejoined her mistress, "than to intrude thyself upon a house other than thy house and gaze on a harem other than thy harem?" "O my lady," said I, "I have an excuse." "And what is thine excuse?" asked she. Quoth I, "I am a stranger and well-nigh dead of thirst." "We accept thine excuse," Night answered she and calling one of her maids, said to her, cccxix.  
 "O Lutf, give him to drink in the golden tankard."

So she brought me a tankard of red gold, set with pearls and jewels, full of water mingled with odoriferous musk and covered with a napkin of green silk; and I addressed myself to drink and was long about it, casting stolen glances at her the while, till I could prolong it no longer. Then I returned the tankard to the maid, but did not offer to go; and she said to me, "O old man, go thy way." "O my lady," replied I, "I am troubled in mind." "For what?" asked she; and I answered, "For the uncertainty of fortune and the vicissitudes of events." "Well mayst thou be troubled thereanent," replied she, "for 'Time' is the mother of wonders. But what hast thou seen of them that thou shouldst muse upon?" Quoth I, "I was think

<sup>1</sup> *Syn.* Fortune (*cz zaman*).

ing of the former owner of this house, for he was my good friend in his lifetime." "What was his name?" asked she. "Mohammed ben Ali the Jeweller," answered I; "and he was a man of great wealth. Did he leave any children?" "Yes," said she; "he left a daughter, Budour by name, who inherited all his wealth." Quoth I, "Meseems thou art his daughter?" "Yes," answered she, laughing; then added, "O old man, thou hast talked long enough; go thy ways." "Needs must I go," replied I; "but I see thou art out of health. Tell me thy case; it may be God will give thee solace at my hands." "O old man," rejoined she, "if thou be a man of discretion, I will discover to thee my secret; but first tell me who thou art, that I may know whether thou art worthy of confidence or not; for the poet saith:

None keepeth secrets but the man who's trusty and discreet: A secret's  
ever safely placed with honest folk and leal;  
For me, my secrets I preserve within a locked-up house, Whose key is  
lost and on whose door is set the Cadi's seal."

"O my lady," answered I, "an thou wouldst know who I am, I am Ali ben Mensour of Damascus, the Wag, boon-companion to the Khalif Haroun er Reshid." When she heard my name she came down from her seat and saluting me, said, "Welcome, O Ibn Mensour! Now will I tell thee my case and entrust thee with my secret. Know that I am a lover separated from her beloved." "O my lady," rejoined I, "thou art fair and shouldst love none but the fair. Whom then dost thou love?" Quoth she, "I love Jubeir ben Umeir es Sheibani, Prince of the Benou Sheiban;"<sup>1</sup> and she described to me a young man than whom there was none handsomer in Bassora. "O my lady," asked I, "have letters or interviews passed between you?"

<sup>1</sup> One of the tribes of the Arabs and that to which the renowned Maan ben Zaid (see Vol. III. p. 317) belonged.

"Yes," answered she; "but his love for me was of the tongue, not of the heart; for he kept not his covenant nor was faithful to his troth." "And what was the cause of your separation?" asked I.

"I was sitting one day," replied she, "whilst my maid here combed my hair. When she had made an end of combing it, she plaited my tresses, and my beauty and grace pleased her; so she bent down to me and kissed my cheek. At that moment, he came in, unawares, and seeing her kiss my cheek, turned away in anger, vowing eternal separation and repeating the following verses:

If any share with me in her I love, incontinent, I'll cast her off from me  
and be to live alone content.

A mistress, sure, is nothing worth, if, in the way of love, She wish for  
aught but that to which the lover doth consent.

And from that time to this, O Ibn Mensour," continued she, "he hath neither written to me nor answered my letters." "And what thinkest thou to do?" asked I. Quoth she, "I have a mind to send him a letter by thee. If thou bring me back an answer, thou shalt have of me five hundred dinars; and if not, then a hundred for thy pains." "Do what seemeth good to thee," answered I. So she called for inkhorn and paper and wrote the following verses:

Whence this estrangement and despite, beloved of my soul? Whither  
have kindness and love between us taken flight?

What makes thee with aversion turn from me? Indeed, thy face is not  
the face I used to know, when we our troth did plight.

Belike, the slanderers have made a false report of me, And thou inclin'  
dst to them, and they redoubled in despite.

If thou believedst their report, far, far it should have been From thee,  
that art too whole of wit at such a bait to bite!

Yea, I conjure thee by thy life, tell me what thou hast heard: For lo!  
thou knowest what was said and wilt not do unright.

If aught I've said that angered thee, a speech of change admits. Ay,  
and interpreting, I trow, may change its meaning quite,

It is a covenant down from God; for even the Pentateuch hath  
 I in mine hand, and I will give it to the other world.  
 Now, if there be any one of folk before a noble Joseph to  
 who I have made a friend, and I will be in his sight  
 before the Lord, and he will be in the sight of the Lord, in a good day Of standing  
 and all will be when God to judgment all shall cite.

Then she sealed the letter and gave it to me. I took  
 it and carried it to the house of Juleir ben Umeir, whom  
 I found absent hunting. So I sat down, to wait for him.  
 And presently he returned; and when I saw him come  
 riding up my wit was confounded by his beauty and grace.  
 As soon as he saw me sitting at the door, he dismounted  
 and coming up to me, saluted and embraced me; and  
 meseemed I embraced the world and all that therein is.  
 Then he carried me into his house and seating me on his  
 own couch called for food. So they brought a table of  
 khelenj\* wood of Khorassan, with feet of gold, whereon  
 were all manner of meats, fried and roasted and the like.

**Night** So I seated myself at the table and examining it, found  
**LXXIX.** the following verses engraved upon it:

Weep for the cranes that erst within the porringers did lie And for the  
 stews and partridges vanished heave a sigh !  
 Mourn for the younglings of the grouse ; lament unceasingly, As, for  
 the onele tes and the fowls browned in the pan, do I.  
 How my heart yearneth for the fish that, in its different kinds, Upon a  
 paste of wheaten flour, lay hidden in the pie !  
 Praise'd be God for the roast meat, as in the dish it lay, With pot-herbs,  
 soaked in vinegar, in porringers hard by,  
 And eke the rice with buffaloes' milk dressed and made savoury, Wherein  
 the hands were plunged and arms were buried bracelet high !  
 O soul, I rede thee patient be, for God is bountiful : What though thy  
 fortunes straitened be, His succour's ever nigh.

\* The Muslims accuse the Jews of having corrupted the Pentateuch  
 and others of their sacred books, even as the Christians the Gospels  
 (see Vol. II. page 149, note), by expunging or altering the passages  
 foretelling the coming of Mohammed.

† See Vol. I. p. 135, note 2.

Then said Juleir, "Put thy hand on our forehead and ease our heart by eating of our victim." "I will," said I, "I will not eat a mouthful, till thou content me in my desire." "What is thy desire?" asked he. So I brought out the letter and gave it to him, but, when he had read it, he tore it in pieces, and throwing it on the floor, said to me, "O Ibn Mensour, I will grant thee whatever thou wilt, save this, that concerns the writer of the letter, for I have no answer to make to her." At this, I fell on my knees, and he caught hold of my knees, saying, "O Ibn Mensour, I will tell thee what she said to thee, for I was present with you." "And what did she say to me?" asked I. "Did she not say to thee," rejoined he, "If thou bring me back an answer, thou shalt have of me five hundred dirhams; and if not, a hundred for thy pains?" "Yes," answered I, and he said, "Abide with me this day and eat and drink and make merry, and thou shalt have five hundred dirhams."

So I sat with him and ate and drank and made merry and entertained him with converse; after which I said to him, "O my master, is there no music in thy house?" "Indeed," answered he, "we have drunk this long while without music." Then he called out, saying, "Ho, Slave-girl Duir!" Whereupon a slave-girl answered him from her chamber and came in to us, with a lute of Indian make, wrapped in a silken bag. She sat down and, having the lute in her lap, preluded in one and twenty measures, then, returning to the first, sang the following verses to a lively measure:

Who hath not tasted the sweet and the bitter of passion, I trow,  
The pleasure of her whom he loves trouble about him, none  
shall know.  
So he, from the pathway of love who hath wandered like a stray,  
The smooth knoweth not from the rough of the roadways, where  
he doth go.  
I ceased not the votaries of love and of passion to cross and to say  
Till I too must taste of its sweet and its bitter, its gladness and woe.

Then I drank a full draught of the cup of its bitters, and humbled was I, And thus to the bondman of Love and its freedman therein was brought low.

How many a night have I passed with the loved one, carousing with him, Whilst I drank from his lips what was sweeter than nectar and colder than snow !

How short was the life of the nights of our pleasance ! It seemed to us still, No sooner was night fallen down than the daybreak to eastward did glow.

But Fortune had vowed she would sever our union and sunder our loves ; And now, in good sooth, she her vow hath accomplished. Fate ordered it so ;

Fate ordered it thus, and against its ordaining, appeal there is none ; For who shall gainsay a supreme one's commandments or cause him forego ?

Hardly had she made an end of these verses, when Jubeir gave a great cry and fell down in a swoon ; whereupon, " May God not punish thee, O old man ! " exclaimed the damsel. " This long time have we drunk without music, for fear the like of this should befall our master. But go now to yon chamber and sleep there." So I went to the chamber in question and slept till the morning, when a page brought me a purse of five hundred dinars and said to me, " This is what my master promised thee ; but return thou not to her who sent thee and let it be as if neither thou nor we had heard of this affair." " I hear and obey," answered I and taking the purse, went my way.

However, I said in myself, " The lady will have expected me since yesterday ; and by Allah, I must needs return to her and tell her what passed between me and him ; or she will curse me and all who come from my country." So I went to her and found her standing behind the door ; and when she saw me, she said, " O Ibn Mensour, thou hast gotten me nought." " Who told thee of this ? " asked I ; and she answered, " O Ibn Mensour, yet another thing hath been revealed to me ; and it is that, when thou gavest him the letter, he tore it in pieces and throwing it

on the floor, said to thee, 'O Ibn Mensour, ask me anything but what relates to the writer of this letter; for I have no reply to make to her.' Then didst thou rise from beside him in anger; but he laid hold of thy skirts, saying, 'Abide with me to-day, for thou art my guest, and eat and drink and make merry; and thou shalt have five hundred dinars.' So thou didst sit with him, eating and drinking and making merry, and entertainedst him with converse; and a slave-girl sang such an air and such verses, whereupon he fell down in a swoon." Quoth I, "Wast thou then with us?" "O Ibn Mensour," replied she, "hast thou not heard the saying of the poet:

The heart of the lover hath eyes, well I wot, That see what the eyes of beholders see not.

But," added she, "day and night alternate not upon Night aught, but they change it." Then she raised her eyes to heaven and said, "O my God and my Master and my Lord, like as Thou hast afflicted me with love of Jubeir ben Umeir, even so do Thou afflict him with love of me and transfer the passion from my heart to his!" Then she gave me a hundred dinars for my pains and I took it and returned to the palace, where I found the Sultan come back from hunting; so I took my pension of him and made my way back to Baghdad.

Next year, I repaired to Bassora, as usual, to seek my pension, and the Sultan paid it to me; but, as I was about to return to Baghdad, I bethought me of the lady Budour and said to myself, "By Allah, I must needs go and see what hath befallen between her and her lover!" So I went to her house and finding the porch swept and sprinkled and slaves and servants and pages standing before the door, said to myself, "Most like grief hath broken the lady's heart and she is dead, and some Amir or other hath taken up his abode in her house." So I went on to

Jubeir's house, where I found the benches of the porch broken down and no pages at the door, as of wont, and said to myself, "Belike he too is dead." Then I took up my station before the door of his house and with my eyes running over with tears, bemoaned it in the following verses :

Lords, that are gone, but whom my heart doth evermore ensue, Return;  
so shall my fatal days return to me with you.

I stand before your sometimestead, bewailing your abodes, With quivering lids, from which the tears run down, like summer dew.

Weeping, I question of the house and ruins, "Where is he Who was the source of benefits and bounties ever new?"

[They answer] "Go thy way, for those thou lov'st from the abode  
Departed are and neath the dust are buried; so adieu!"

May God not stint us of the sight [in dreams] of all their charms Nor be  
their noble memories aye absent from men's view!

As I was thus bewailing the folk of the house, there came a black slave thereout and said to me, "Hold thy peace, O old man! May thy mother be bereft of thee! What ails thee to bemoan the house thus?" Quoth I, "I knew it of yore, when it belonged to a good friend of mine." "What was his name?" asked the slave. And I answered, "Jubeir ben Umeir the Sheibani." "And what hath befallen him?" rejoined he. "Praised be God, he is yet in the enjoyment of wealth and rank and prosperity, except that God hath stricken him with love of a damsel called the lady Budour; and he is overcome with love of her, that, for the violence of his passion and torment, he is like a great rock overthrown. If he hunger, he saith not, 'Feed me;' nor, if he thirst, doth he say, 'Give me to drink.'" Quoth I, "Ask leave for me to go in to him." "O my lord," said the slave, "wilt thou go in to him who understands or to him who understands not?" "I must needs see him, whatever be his case," answered I.

So he went in and presently returned with permission for me to enter, whereupon I went in to Jubeir and found him like a rock overthrown, understanding neither sign

not speech. I spoke to him, but he answered me not, and one of his servants said to me, "O my lord, if thou know aught of verse, repeat it and raise thy voice, and he will be aroused by this and speak with thee." So I recited the following verses.

Budour's love has then forgotten or art deaf as thou art? With  
 "O my lord," said I, "is there aught thou wouldst have me  
 do for thee?" "Yes," answered he; "I would fain write  
 her a letter and send it to her by thee. If thou bring me  
 back an answer, thou shalt have of me a thousand dirhams,  
 and if not, two hundred for thy pains." "Do what seemeth  
 good to thee," said I. So he called to one of his slave-  
 girls for inkhorn and paper and wrote the following verses.

By Allah, O my lady, love cut on me, I pray! For all my wit by  
 passion is rivetted away  
 Yea, love for thee no longer has mastered me and clad with  
 ness and bequeathed me the crown and sword  
 Aforetime, O my lady, by love I set small store And deemed it light and  
 easy to bear, until to-day;  
 But now that Love hath lorn me the bellows of its sea, Thou shalt excuse  
 me cutting, who languish near the way.  
 Wouldst thou feign thyself to grant me; or, if thou wilt me slave, At least,  
 then, for thy victim forget thou not to pray.

Then he sealed the letter and gave it to me. I took it and repairing to Budour's house, raised the curtain of the door, little by little, as of wont, and looking in, saw ten damsels, high-bosomed maids, like moons, and the lady Budour sitting in their midst as she were the full moon among stars or the sun, when it is clear of clouds; nor

<sup>1</sup> i.e. as usual.

was there on her any trace of pain or care. As I looked and marvelled at her case, she turned and seeing me standing at the gate, said to me, "Welcome and fair welcome to thee, O Ibn Mensour! Come in." So I entered and saluting her, gave her the letter. She read it and laughing, said to me, "O Ibn Mansour, the poet lied not when he said :

The love of thee I will endure with patient constancy, Till such time  
as a messenger shall come to me from thee.

O Ibn Mensour," added she, "I will write thee an answer that he may give thee what he promised thee." "May God requite thee with good!" answered I. So she called for inkhorn and paper and wrote the following verses :

How comes it my vows I fulfilled and thou, thou wast false to thy plight ?  
Thou sawst me do justice and truth, and yet thou thyself didst  
unright.

It was thou that beganest on me with rupture and rigour, I trow ; 'Twas  
thou that play'dst foul, and with thee began the untruth and the  
slight.

Yea, still I was true to my troth and cherished but thee among men And  
ceased not thine honour to guard and keep it unsullied and bright,  
Till tidings of fashions full foul I heard, as reported of thee, And saw  
with mine eyes what thou didst, to harm me and work me despite.  
Shall I then abuse my estate, that thine may exalted become ? By God,  
hadst thou generous been, the like should thy conduct requite !

So now unto solace I'll turn my heart, with forgetting, from thee And  
washing my hands of thy thought, blot despair for thee out of my  
spright.

"By Allah, O my lady," said I, "there needs but the  
reading of this letter, to kill him !" So I tore it in pieces  
and said to her, "Write him other than this." "I hear  
and obey," answered she and wrote the following :

Indeed, I am consoled and sleep is pleasant to mine eyes ; For I have  
heard what came of prate of slanderers and spies.

My heart my summons hath obeyed, thee to forget ; and eke My lids to  
sunt from wake for thee have seen it good and wise.

He lies who say that seven seas border us, for we are not in none of course than west, in course of us.  
I've grown to turn away from the things that are means of this. And  
look upon it as a thing at which my eyes are turned.  
Behold, I have forgotten thee with a just and true mind. Let the world say  
as it will, and let the world be as it will, for I am not a man of the world.

"Alas, O my lord," said I, "when he said, 'the  
world,' he said 'the world' and 'the world' and 'the world' and  
quoth she, 'Is it not the world that is the world?' and 'the world' and  
him as thou sayst?" "Had I not said, 'the world' and 'the world' and  
pled I, 'it were but the world that is the world' and 'the world' and  
nature of the world." When she said, 'the world' and 'the world' and  
with tears and she wrote him a letter, O Commander of  
the Faithful, there is none in thy court that would write  
the like of it; and therein were the everlastings.

How long, O all this despite continue and this is the world? My everlastings  
on my thou sure hast it all.  
Mayhap, I did not say it not; so tell me what thou hadst to  
me, that did our love say.  
Ever, as I welcome the people to mine eyes and I did, so would I welcome  
thee, beloved, to my house.  
I've quaffed the cup of love, and I've drunk and pure; so, O thou  
me drunk, reproach me not nor shame.

Then she sealed it and gave it to me; and I said, "O  
my lady, this thy letter will heal the sick and ease the  
thirsting soul." Then I took it and was going away, when  
she called me back and said to me, "Tell him that I will  
be his guest this night." At this I rejoiced greatly and  
carried the letter to Jubeir, whom I found with his eyes  
fixed on the door, expecting the reply. I gave him the  
letter and he opened and read it, then gave a great cry  
and fell down in a swoon. When he came to himself, he  
said to me, "O Ibn M'nour, did she indeed write this  
letter with her hand and touch it with her fingers?" "O  
my lord," answered I, "do folk write with their feet?"  
And by Allah, O Commander of the Faithful, I had not

done speaking, when we heard the chink of her anklets in the vestibule and she entered.

When he saw her, he sprang to his feet, as though there ailed him nought, and embraced her as the letter Lam embraces Alif,<sup>1</sup> and the malady, that would not depart, ceased from him. Then he sat down, but she abode standing and I said to her, "O my lady, why dost thou not sit?" Quoth she, "I will not sit, O Ibn Mensour, save on a condition that is between us." "And what is that?" asked I. "None may know lovers' secrets," answered she and putting her mouth to Jubeir's ear, whispered to him; whereupon, "I hear and obey," replied he and rising, said somewhat privily to one of his slaves, who went out and returned, in a little, with a Cadi and two witnesses. Then Jubeir rose and taking a bag containing a hundred thousand dinars, said, "O Cadi, marry me to this young lady and write this sum to her dowry." Quoth the Cadi to her, "Say, 'I consent to this.'" "I consent to this," said she, whereupon he drew up the contract of marriage, and she opened the bag and taking out a handful of gold, gave it to the Cadi and the witnesses and handed the rest to Jubeir.

Then the Cadi and the witnesses withdrew, and I sat with them, in mirth and delight, till the most part of the night was past, when I said in myself, "These are lovers and have been this long while separated. I will go now and sleep in some place afar from them and leave them to be private, one with the other." So I rose, but she laid hold of my skirts, saying, "What thinkest thou to do?" "So and so," answered I. But she rejoined, "Sit still,

<sup>1</sup> The force of this comparison will best appear from the actual figuration of the Arabic double-letter Lam-Alif, (*Anglice* LA,) which is made up of the two letters, ل, (initial form of Lam) and ا (final of Alif,) and is written thus, لا.

when we would be rid of thee, we will send thee away." So I sat with them till near daybreak, when she said to me, "O Ibn Mensour, go to yonder chamber; for we have furnished it for thee, and it is thy sleeping place." So I went thither and slept till morning, when a page brought me basin and ewer, and I made the ablution and prayed the morning rayer. Then I sat down and presently, Jubair and his mistress came out of the bath in the house, washing their locks.

I wished them good morning and gave them joy of their safety and reunion, saying to Jubair, "That which began with constraint hath ended in contentment." "Thou sayest well," replied he; "and indeed thou deservest largesse." And he called his treasurer and bade him fetch three thousand dinars. So he brought a purse containing that sum, and Jubair gave it to me, saying, "Favour us by accepting this." "I will not take it," answered I, "till thou tell me the manner of the transfer of love from her to thee, after so great an aversion." "I hear and obey," said he. "Know that we have a festival, called the festival of the New Year, when all the people use to take boat and go a-pleasuring on the river. So I went out, with my comrades, and saw a boat, wherein were half a score damsels like moons, and amongst them, the lady Budour, with her lute in her hand. She preened in eleven modes, then returning to the first, sang the following verses:

Fire is not so fierce and so hot as the fires in my heart that glow, And  
granite itself is less hard than the heart of my lord, I trow.  
Indeed, when I think on his make and his fashion, I marvel to see A  
heart that is harder than rock in a body that's softer than snow.

Quoth I to her, 'Repeat the verses and the air.' But Night she would not; so I bade the boatmen pelt her with orange oranges, and they pelted her till we feared her boat would sink. Then she went her way, and this is how the love was transferred from her breast to mine.' So I gave

them joy of their union and taking the purse with its contents, returned to Baghdad.'

When the Khalif heard Ibn Mensour's story, his heart was lightened and the restlessness and oppression from which he suffered forsook him.

### THE MAN OF YEMEN AND HIS SIX SLAVE-GIRLS.

The Khalif El Mamoun was sitting one day in his palace, surrounded by his grantees and officers of state, and there were present also before him all his poets and minions, amongst the rest one named Mohammed of Bassora. Presently, the Khalif turned to the latter and said to him, 'O Mohammed, I wish thee to tell me something that I have never before heard.' 'O Commander of the Faithful,' answered Mohammed, 'shall I tell thee a thing I have heard with my ears or a thing that I have seen with my eyes?' 'Tell me whichever is the rarer,' said El Mamoun.

'Know, then, O Commander of the Faithful,' began Mohammed, 'that there lived once a wealthy man, who was a native of Yemen; but he left his native land and came to this city of Baghdad, whose sojourn so pleased him that he transported hither his family and possessions. Now he had six slave-girls, the first fair, the second dark, the third fat, the fourth thin, the fifth yellow and the sixth black, all fair of face and perfectly accomplished and skilled in the arts of singing and playing upon instruments of music. One day he sent for them all and called for meat and drink; and they ate and drank and made merry. Then he filled the cup and taking it in his hand, said to the blonde, "O new-moon-face, let us hear somewhat pleasing." So she took the lute and tuning it, made music thereon with such melodious trills and modulations

that the place danced to the rhythm, after which she played a lively measure and sang the following verses:

I have a friend, whose form is mirrored in mine eye, And deep within  
my breast, his name doth ever lie.  
When I call him back to mind, I am all heart, And when on him I  
gaze, I love myself and him.  
“I swear the love of him,” my companion says; and I, “That which is  
not to be, how shall it be?” is my reply.  
“Go forth from me,” saith I, “and leave me, cease your merriment; for  
that hath made him, that’s given me to be.”

At this their master was moved to mirth and drank off his cup, gave the chamberlains to drink, after which he said to the brunette, “O light of the bracers’ and delight of souls, let us hear thy lovely voice, where with all that hearken are ravished.” So she took the lute and trilled upon it, till the place was moved to mirth; then, taking all hearts with her graceful bandings, she sang the following verses:

As thy face liveth, none hurt me I’ll love nor cherish a’er, Till death,  
nor ever thy love will I be false, I swear.  
O full moon, shrouded, as it were a veil, with loveliness, Ad love y’ones  
on earth that be beneath thy banners true.  
Thou, that in pleasantness and grace excellest all the fair, May God, the  
Lord of heaven and earth, be with thee ever ywhere!

The man was pleased and drank off his cup; after which he filled again and taking the goblet in his hand, beckoned to the plump girl and bade her sing and play. So she took the lute and striking a grief-dispelling measure, sang as follows:

I but thy consent be assured, O thou who art all my desire, Be all the  
folk angered ‘gainst me; I set not a whit by their ire.  
And if thou but show me thy face, thy brilliant and beautiful face, I  
reck not if all of the kings of the earth from my vision retire.  
Thy favour, O thou unto whom all beauty must needs be referred, Of  
the goods and the sweets of the world shall I seek an increase!

<sup>1</sup> i.e. O thou, whose glance is as the light of the glowing embers.

The man was charmed and emptying his cup, gave the girls to drink. Then he beckoned to the slender girl and said to her, "O houri of Paradise, feed thou our ears with sweet sounds." So she took the lute and tuning it, preluded and sang the following verses :

Is it not martyrdom that I for thine estrangement dree, Seeing, indeed,  
I cannot live, if thou depart from me? •  
Is there no judge, in Love its law, to judge betwixt us twain, To do me  
justice on thy head and take my wreak of thee?

Their lord rejoiced and emptying the cup, gave the girls to drink. Then he signed to the yellow girl and said to her, "O sun of the day, let us hear some pleasant verses." So she took the lute and preluding after the goodliest fashion, sang as follows :

I have a lover, whenas I draw him nigh, He bares upon me a sword  
from either eye.  
May God avenge me some whit of him ! For lo, He doth oppress me,  
whose heart in 's hand doth lie.  
Oft though, "Renounce him, my heart," I say, yet it Will to none other  
than him itself apply.  
He's all I ask for, of all created things ; Yet jealous Fortune doth him  
to me deny.

The man rejoiced and drank and gave the girls to drink ; then he filled the cup and taking it in his hand, signed to the black girl, saying, "O apple of the eye, let us have a taste of thy fashion, though it be but two words." So she took the lute and preluded in various modes, then returned to the first and sang the following verses to a lively air :

O eyes, be large with tears and pour them forth amain, For, lo, for very  
love my senses fail and wane.  
All manner of desire I suffer for his sake I cherish, and my foes make  
merry at my pain.  
My enviers me forbid the roses of a cheek ; And yet I have a heart that  
is to roses fain.

Ay, once the cups went round with joyance and delight And to the  
 smitten lutes, the goblets did we drain,  
 What time my love kept troth and I was mad for him And in faith's  
 heaven, the star of happiness did reign.  
 But lo, he turned away from me, sans fault of mine ! Is there a bitterer  
 thing than distance and disdain ?  
 Upon his cheeks there bloom a pair of roses red, Blown ready to be  
 plucked ; ah God, those roses twain !  
 Were't lawful to prostrate oneself to any else Than God, I'd sure pro-  
 strate myself unto the swain.

Then rose the six girls and kissing the ground before  
 their lord, said to him, "Judge thou between us, O our  
 lord !" He looked at their beauty and grace and the  
 difference of their colours and praised God the Most High  
 and glorified Him ; then said he, "There is none of you  
 but has read the Koran and learnt to sing and is versed  
 in the chronicles of the ancients and the doings of past  
 peoples ; so it is my desire that each of you rise and  
 pointing to her opposite, praise herself and dispraise her  
 rival ; that is to say, let the blonde point to the black,  
 the plump to the slender and the yellow to the brunette ;  
 and after, the latter shall, each in turn, do the like with  
 the former ; and be this illustrated with citations from the  
 Holy Koran and somewhat of anecdotes and verse, so as  
 to show forth your culture and elegance of discourse."  
 Quoth they. "We hear and obey."

So the blonde rose first and pointing at the black, said **Night**  
 to her, "Out on thee, blackamoor ! It is told that white-~~ccccxb~~  
 ness saith, 'I am the shining light, I am the rising full  
 moon.' My colour is patent and my forehead is resplendent,  
 and of my beauty quoth the poet :

A blonde with smooth and polished cheeks, right delicate and fair, As if  
 a pearl in beauty hid, as in a shell, she were.  
 Her shape a splendid Alif<sup>1</sup> is, her smile a medial Mim<sup>2</sup> And over it her  
 eyebrows make inverted Nouns,<sup>3</sup> a pair.

<sup>1</sup> Thus figured in Arabic ١.    <sup>2</sup> Thus ٢.    <sup>3</sup> Thus ٣

Ye and the roses of her cheeks, and her brow A frow that  
 the cruel shadow with teeth and with despair.  
 I to her cheek and shape two roses, her cheeks are roses red, sweet  
 last, ay, and claretine and myrtle, rich and rare.  
 'Tis not saying 'twas, to be imprinted in the minds But, in the  
 saying 'thy hope, how many minds, are made!

My colour is like the wholesome day and the newly-  
 gathered orange blossom and the sparkling star, and in-  
 deed quoth God the Most High, in His precious book, to  
 His prophet Moses (on whom be peace), 'Put thy hand  
 into thy bosom and it shall come forth white without  
 hurt'<sup>1</sup> And again He saith, 'As for those whose faces  
 are made white, they are in the mercy of God and dwell  
 for ever therein'<sup>2</sup> My colour is a miracle and my grace  
 an extreme and my beauty a term. It is on the like of  
 me that clothes show fair and to the like of me that hearts  
 incline. Moreover, in whiteness are many excellences; for  
 instance, the snow falls white from heaven, and it is tra-  
 ditional that white is the most beautiful of colours. The  
 Muslims also glory in white turbans; but I should be  
 tedious, were I to repeat all that may be said in praise  
 of white; little and enough is better than too much. So  
 now I will begin with thy dispraise, O black, O colour of  
 ink and blacksmith's dust, thou whose face is like the  
 crow that brings about lovers' parting! Verily, the poet  
 saith in praise of white and dispraise of black:

Steer not that for their milky hue white pearls in price excel And charcoal  
 for a groat a load the folk do buy and sell?  
 And eke white fies, 'tis well known, do enter Paradise, Whilst faces  
 black appointed are to fill the halls of Hell.

And indeed it is told in certain histories, related on the  
 authority of devout men, that Noah (on whom be peace)  
 was sleeping one day, with his sons Ham and Shem seated  
 at his head, when a wind sprang up and lifting his clothes,

<sup>1</sup> *Koran* xxvii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Koran* iii. 102.

and his ask the ... it ... and an ...  
not cover ... but ...  
sently. Now ... and ...  
them and ... So ...  
and from ... the ...  
K ... and ...  
be ...  
came the ...  
the ...

(C) then he saith, "It is better to be a poor man than a rich man." And he saith to the rich man, who  
 and perished at the hour of death. "Dost thou know  
 that, in the Kingdom of God, to the poor and to the  
 that he hath the favor of God the Most High, 'By the  
 right, which it is his due to be the first, and by  
 the day, when it shall be his to be the first.' If it  
 were not for the favor of God, he would be the first  
 would be, it and give it precedence of the day. And  
 and the day of the day and the day of the day.  
 Knowest thou not that the Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of  
 youth and that, when the day of the day is over, the  
 delights pass away and the hour of death draweth  
 Were not black the most beautiful of the day, I had  
 not set it in the hand of the day and the day of the  
 eye; and now excellent is the saying of the day.

An if I cheah the dusky mul, his s'ter a to w v. In i've the  
 hae of the core of t' e' art's t' e' m' f'  
 And v u s; nor in error I c'w the s'tem f' e' l' l' n' s, b'  
 t' s the c' l' u' f' a' v' y' n' and s'tr' a' b' l' i' n' the n' s' t' e' n' d'

And that of another

The brown not the white, are first in my life And were (at first) my  
loved of me

For the color of Jan ask ups have the y, We not the white have the u  
of leucosy.

<sup>1</sup> *Κοινωνία* κ. 1, 2.

And of a third :

Black women, white of deeds, are like indeed to eyne That, though yet  
black they be, with peerless splendours shine.

If I go mad for her, be not amazed ; for black The source of madness is  
when in the feminine.<sup>1</sup>

'Tis as my colour were the middle dark of night ; For all no moon it be,  
yet brings it light, in fine.

Moreover, is the companying together of lovers good  
but in the night ? Let this quality and excellence suffice  
thee. What protects lovers from spies and censors like  
the blackness of the shadows ? And nought gives them  
cause to fear discovery like the whiteness of the dawn.  
So, how many claims to honour are there not in blackness  
and how excellent is the saying of the poet :

I visit them, and the murk of night doth help me to my will And seconds  
me, but the white of dawn is hostile to me still.

And that of another :

How many a night in joy I've passed with the beloved one, What while  
the darkness curtained us about with tresses dun !

Whenas the light of morn appeared, it struck me with affright, And I  
to him, 'The Magians lie, who worship fire and sun.'

And saith a third :

He came forth to visit me, shrouding himself in the cloak of the night,  
And hastened his steps, as he wended, for caution and fear and  
affright.

Then rose I and laid in his pathway my cheek, as a carpet it were, For  
abjection, and trailed o'er my traces my skirts, to efface them from  
sight.

But lo, the new moon rose and shone, like a nail-paring cleft from the  
nail, And all but discovered our loves with the gleam of her meddle-  
some light.

And then there betided between us what I'll not discover, i' faith : So  
question no more of the matter and deem not of ill or unright.

And a fourth :

Foregather with thy lover, whilst night your loves may screen ; For  
that the sun's a telltale, the moon a go-between.

<sup>1</sup> *Sauda*, feminine of *aswed* (black), *syn.* black bile (melancholia).

## And a fifth :

I love not white women, with fat blown out and overhid, The girl of  
all girls for me & he that is not by my side  
Let other then get it mount, it liketh me; as for me, I'll ride but  
the first traine I come on the day of the cavalcade.

## And a sixth :

My loved one came to me by night And we did sleep and interlace  
And lay together through the night, I, I, I, the one of the space.  
To God, say I, I pray that He Will be true to us of His grace  
And make right fast to me, what while I hold my own true embrace.

Were I to set forth all the cause of blackness, I should  
be tedious, but little and much is better than great  
plenty and too much. As for me, O blonde, thy colour  
is that of leprosy and thine embrace is satisfaction, and  
it is of report that frost and intense cold<sup>1</sup> are in Hell  
for the torment of the wicked. Again, of black things  
is ink, wherewith is written the word of God, and were  
it not for black ambergris and black musk, there would  
be no perfumes to carry to kings. How in my glories are  
there not in blackness and how well saith the poet.

Do thou not see that musk, indeed, is worth its weight in gold, Whilst  
for a dirlen an I no more a load of mine is sold?  
Black eyes cast arrows at men's hearts; but water of the eyes, In  
man, is judged of all to be unsightly to behold."

"It sufficeth," said her master. "Sit down." So she  
sat down and he signed to the fat girl, who rose and Night  
pointing at the slim girl, uncovered her arms and legs xxxxb  
and bared her stomach, showing its creases and the  
roundness of her navel. Then she donned a shift of fine  
stuff, that showed her whole body, and said "Praised be  
God who created me, for that He beautified my face and  
made me fat and fair and likened me to branches laden  
with fruit and bestowed upon me abounding beauty and  
brightness; and praised be He no less, for that He hath

<sup>1</sup> The distinctive colour of which is white.

given me the precedence and honoured me, when He speaks of me in His holy book! Quoth the Most High, 'And he brought a fat calf.'<sup>1</sup> And indeed He hath made me like unto an orchard, full of peaches and pomegranates. Verily, the townsfolk long for fat birds and eat of them and love not lean birds; so do the sons of Adam desire fat meat and eat of it. How many precious attributes are there not in fatness, and how well saith the poet:

Take leave of thy love, for the caravan, indeed, is on the start. O man,  
canst thou bear to say farewell and thus from her to part?

'Tis as her going were, I trow, but to her neighbour's house, The fault-  
less gait of a fat fair maid, that never tires the heart.

Sawst thou ever one stop at a butcher's stall, but sought fat meat of him? The wise say, 'Pleasure is in three things, eating flesh and riding on flesh and the thrusting of flesh into flesh.' As for thee, O thin one, thy legs are like sparrow's legs or pokers, and thou art like a cruciform plank or a piece of poor meat; there is nought in thee to gladden the heart; even as saith of thee the poet:

Now God forbend that aught enforce me take for bedfellow A woman  
like a foot-rasp, wrapt in palm-fibres and tow!

In every limb she has a horn, that butts me in my sleep, So that at day-  
break, bruised and sore, I rise from her and go."

"It is enough," quoth her master. "Sit down." So she sat down and he signed to the slender girl, who rose, as she were a willow-wand or a bamboo-shoot or a plant of sweet basil, and said, "Praised be God who created me and beautified me and made my embraces the end of all desire and likened me to the branch, to which all hearts incline. If I rise, I rise lightly; if I sit, I sit with grace; I am nimble-witted at a jest and sweeter-souled than cheerfulness [itself]. Never heard I one describe his mistress, saying, 'My beloved is the bigness

<sup>1</sup> *Koran* li. 26.

of an elephant or like a long wide mountain ; ' but rather,  
' My lady hath a slender waist and a slim shape.'

A little food contents me and a little water stays my thirst ; my sport is nimble and my habit elegant ; for I am sprightlier than the sparrow and lighter-footed than the starling. My favours are the desire of the longing and the delight of the seeker ; for I am goodly of shape, sweet of smile and graceful as the willow-wand or the bamboo-cane or the basil-plant ; nor is there any can compare with me in grace, even as saith one of me :

Thy shape unto the sapling liken I And set my hope to win thee or to die.

Distraught, I follow thee, and sore afraid, Lest any look on thee with evil eye.

It is for the like of me that lovers run mad and that the longing are distracted. If my lover be minded to draw me to him, I am drawn to him, and if he would have me incline to him, I incline to him and not against him. But as for thee, O fat of body, thine eating is as that of an elephant, and neither much nor little contents thee. When thou liest with a man, he hath no ease of thee, nor can he find a way to take his pleasure of thee ; for the bigness of thy belly holds him off from clipping thee and the grossness of thy thighs hinders him from coming at thy kaze. What comeliness is there in thy grossness and what pleasantness or courtesy in thy coarse nature ? Fat meat is fit for nought but slaughter, nor is there aught therein that calls for praise. If one joke with thee, thou art angry ; if one sport with thee, thou art sulky ; if thou sleep, thou snoorest ; if thou walk, thou pantest ; if thou eat, thou art never satisfied. Thou art heavier than mountains and fouler than corruption and sin. Thou hast in thee nor movement nor blessing nor thinkest of aught but to eat and sleep. If thou make water, thou scatterest ; if thou void, thou gruntest like a bursten

wine-skin or a surly elephant. If thou go to the draught-house, thou needest one to wash thy privy parts and pluck out the hairs; and this is the extreme of laziness and the sign of stupidity. In fine, there is no good thing in thee, and indeed the poet saith of thee:

Heavy and swollen with fat, like a blown-out water-skin, With thighs  
like the pillars of stone that buttress a mountain's head,  
Lo, if she walk in the West, so cumbrous her corpulence is, The Eastern  
hemisphere hears the sound of her heavy tread."

Quoth her master, "It is enough: sit down." So she sat down and he signed to the yellow girl, who rose to her feet and praised God and magnified His name, calling down peace and blessing on the best of His creatures;<sup>1</sup> after  
**Night** which she pointed at the brunette and said to her, "I am  
**ccxxxviii.** praised in the Koran, and the Compassionate One hath described my colour and its excellence over all others in His manifest Book, where He saith, 'A yellow [heifer], pure yellow, whose colour rejoices the beholders.'<sup>2</sup> Wherefore my colour is a portent and my grace an extreme and my beauty a term; for that my colour is the colour of a dinar and of the planets and moons and of apples. My fashion is the fashion of the fair, and the colour of saffron outvies all other colours; so my fashion is rare and my colour wonderful. I am soft of body, and of great price, comprising all attributes of beauty. My colour, in that which exists, is precious as virgin gold, and how many glorious qualities are there not in me! Of the like of me quoth the poet:

Yellow she is, as is the sun that shineth in the sky, And like to golden  
dinars, eke, to see, her beauties are.

Nor with her brightness, anywise, can saffron hold compare, And even  
the very moon herself her charms outvie by far.

<sup>1</sup> Mohammed.

<sup>2</sup> *Koran* ii. 64, referring to an expiatory heifer which the Jews were commanded, through Moses, to sacrifice.

And now I will begin in thy dispraise, O brown of favour! Thy colour is that of the buffalo, and all souls shudder at thy sight. If thy colour be in aught, it is blamed; if it be in food, it is poisoned, for thy colour is that of flies and is a mark of ugliness in dogs. It is, among colours, one which strikes with amazement and is of the signs of mourning. Never heard I of brown gold or brown pearls or brown jewels. If thou enter the wardrobe, thy colour chafes, and when thou comest out, thou addest a new ugliness to thine ugliness. Thou art neither black, that thou mayst be known, nor white, that thou mayst be described; and there is no good quality in thee, even as saith of thee the poet:

As a complexion unto her, the haire's not doth serve; Her murky colour  
is as dust on comers' feet apast.

No sooner fall mine eyes on her, though but a moment's space, Than  
troubles and misgivings straight beset me thick and last."

"Enough," said her master. "Sit down." So she sat down and he signed to the brunette. Now she was endowed with grace and beauty and symmetry and perfection, delicate of body, with coal-black hair, slender shape, rosy, oval cheeks, liquid black eyes, fair face, eloquent tongue, slim waist and heavy buttocks. So she rose and said, "Praised be God who hath created me neither blameably fat nor lankily slender, neither white like leprosy nor yellow like colic nor black like coal, but hath made my colour to be beloved of men of wit; for all the poets praise brunettes in every tongue and exalt their colour over all others. Brown of hue, praiseworthy of qualities; and God bless him who saith:

In the brunettes a meaning is, couldst read its writ aright, Thine eyes  
would never look again on others, red or white.

Free-flowing speech and amorous looks would teach Harout<sup>1</sup> himself  
The arts of sorcery and spells of magic and of might.

<sup>1</sup> See note, Vol. III. p. 104.

and faith as ether.

Give me brunettes; the Syrian spears, so slender and so straight, Tell on  
the slender dusky maids, so lithe and proud of gait.  
Languid of eyelids, with a down like silk upon her cheek, Within her  
wasting lover's heart she queen, it still in state.

And yet another:

Yea, by my life, such virtues in goodly brownness lie, One spot thereof  
makes whiteness the dimming moons outvie;  
But if the tike of whiteness it be rowed, then, for sure, I'll deny we  
than, muted unto reproach thereby.  
Not with her wine<sup>1</sup> I'm drunken, but with her tresses<sup>2</sup> bright That  
make all creatures drunken that dwell beneath the sky.  
Each of her charms doth envy the others; yea, and each To be like  
down so silky upon her cheek doth sigh.

And again:

Why should I not incline me unto the silken down On the cheeks of a  
dusky maiden, like the cane straight and brown,  
Seeing the spot of beauty in waterlilies' cups Is of the poets fabled to  
be all beauty's crown?  
Yea, and I see all lovers the swarthy-coloured mole, Under the ebon  
pupil, do honour and renown.  
Why, then, do censors blame me for loving one who's all A mole? May  
Allah rid me of every railing clown!

My form is beautiful and my shape slender; kings desire  
my colour and all love it, rich and poor. I am pleasant,  
nimble, handsome, elegant, soft of body and great of price.  
I am perfect in beauty and breeding and eloquence; my  
aspect is comely and my tongue fluent, my habit light and  
my sport graceful. As for thee, [O yellow girl,] thou art  
like unto a mallow of Bab el Louc, yellow and made all  
of sulphur. Perdition to thee, O pennyworth of sorrel,  
O rust of copper, O owl's face and food of the damned!  
Thy benefellow, for oppression of spirit, is buried in the

<sup>1</sup> *Sulafek*.

<sup>2</sup> *Sawalit*, plural of *salifeh* (equivalent of *sulafek*). A play upon the  
double meaning of the word is, of course, intended

tombs, and there is no good thing, but it is as with the poet, of the like of thee:

Palene's<sup>1</sup> score on her for all no ill she doth, for she is more than  
 distressed by it; yet, as she is, so she is yet  
 If thou wilt, then, in so, as she is, then, I will, I will  
 with a kiss of her face, in her face, in her face."

"Enough," said her mother; "go down." Then he made his way  
 down to the women and did them all the same, and then he  
 of honour and he did them with his hands, and he  
 hand and sea. And never, O Commander of the Faithful,  
 in any place or time have I seen better than these  
 fair damsels."

When the Khalif El Mamoun heard this story of  
 Mohammed of Bissra, he said to him, "O Mohammed,  
 knowest thou the abiding place of these damsels and their  
 mother, and canst thou make shift to buy them of him to-  
 day?" "O Commander of the Faithful," answered he,  
 have heard that their manner is wrought up in them and  
 cannot endure to be parted from them." "Take three or  
 four hundred dinars,—that is, ten thousand for each girl,—  
 rejoined the Khalif, "and go to his house and buy them  
 of him." So Mohammed took the money and taking  
 himself to the man of Yemen, acquired him with it  
 Khalif's wish. He consented to sell them at that price,  
 to pleasure him, and despatched them to El Mamoun,  
 who assigned them an elegant lodging and used to sit  
 with them therein, marvelling at their beauty and grace,  
 no less than at their varied colours and the excellence of  
 their speech.

After awhile, when their former owner could no longer  
 endure separation from them, he sent a letter to the  
 Khalif, complaining of his ardent love for them and re-  
 quaining, amongst the rest, the following verses:

<sup>1</sup> *Syn. yellowness* (see p. 101.)

Six damsels fair and bright have captivated me ; My blessing and my  
 peace the six fair maidens greet !  
 My life, indeed, are they, my hearing and my sight, Yea, and my very  
 drink, my pleasure and my meat.  
 No other love can bring me solace for their charms, And slumber, after  
 them, no more to me is sweet.  
 Alas, my long regret, my weeping for their loss ! Would I had ne'er  
 been born, to know this sore defeat !  
 For eyes, bedecked and fair with brows like bow'd bows, Have smitten  
 me to death with arrows keen and fleet. \*

When the letter came to El Mamoun's hands, he clad the six damsels in rich apparel and giving them threescore thousand dinars, sent them back to their master, who rejoiced in them with an exceeding joy,—more by token of the money they brought him,—and abode with them in all delight and pleasure of life, till there came to them the Destroyer of Delights and the Sunderer of Companies.

#### HAROUN ER RESHID AND THE DAMSEL AND ABU NUWAS.

The Khalif Haroun er Reshid, being one night exceedingly restless and oppressed with melancholy thought, went out and walked about his palace, till he came to a chamber, over whose doorway hung a curtain. He raised the curtain and saw, at the upper end of the room, a bed, on which lay something black, as it were a man asleep, with a candle on his right hand and another on his left and by his side a flagon of old wine, over against which stood the cup. The Khalif wondered at this, saying, 'How came yonder black by this wine-service?' Then, drawing near the bed, he found that it was a girl asleep there, veiled with her hair, and uncovering her face, saw that it was like the moon on the night of her full. So he filled a cup of wine and drank it to the roses

of her cheeks; then bent over her and kissed a mole on her face, whereupon she awoke and cried out, saying, 'O Trusty One of God, what is to do?' 'A guest who knocks at thy dwelling by night,' replied the Khalif, '[hoping] that thou wilt give him hospitality till the dawn.' 'It is well,' answered she; 'I will grace the guest with my hearing and my sight.'

So she brought ~~the~~ wine and they drank together, after which she took the lute and tuning it, preluded in one- and twenty modes, then returning to the first, struck a lively measure and sang the following verses:

The tongue of passion in my heart bespeaks thee for my soul, Telling I  
love thee with a love that nothing can control.

I have an eye, that testifies unto my sore disease, And eke a heart with  
parting wrung, a-throb for love and dole

Indeed, I cannot hide the love that fets my life away; Longing increases  
still on me, my tears for ever roll.

Ah me, before the love of thee, I knew not what love was, But God's  
decree must have its course on every living soul.

Then said she, 'O Commander of the Faithful, I am **Night**  
a wronged woman.' 'How so?' quoth he, 'and who **xxxxix**  
hath wronged thee?' She answered, 'Thy son bought  
me awhile ago, for ten thousand dirhems, meaning to give  
me to thee; but the daughter of thine uncle<sup>1</sup> sent him  
the price aforesaid and bade him shut me up from thee  
in this chamber.' Whereupon, 'Ask a boon of me,' said  
the Khalif; and she, 'I ask thee to lie to-morrow night  
with me.' 'If it be the will of God,' replied the Khalif,  
and leaving her, went away.

Next morning, he repaired to his sitting-room and  
called for Abou Nuwas, but found him not and sent his  
chamberlain to seek for him. The chamberlain found  
him in pawn, in a tavern, for a score of a thousand  
dirhems, that he had spent on a certain boy, and ques-

<sup>1</sup> A title of the Prophet.

<sup>2</sup> His wife Zubeidah

tioned him. So he told him what had happened to him, the boy and how he had spent a thousand of his money on him, whereupon quoth the chamberlain, "Show him to me, and if he be worth this thou art excused." "Wait awhile," replied the poet, "and thou shalt see him presently." As they were talking, up came the boy, clad in a white tunic, under which was a gown of red and velvet of blue. When Abou Nuwas saw him, he sighed and repeated the following verses.

As he appeared in a garment of white His eye and his eyelid with  
 far more light.

Quoth I, "Dost thou pass and state time not? Though God know, thy  
 greeting were sweet to my sight."

He the blessed who mantled with costly cheeks, Who cries, "I know  
 not what He will, of His might!"

"Leave prattle," he answered, "for surely my Lord is wondrous of  
 working, sans flaw or dissight."

Yea, truly my garment is white as my face And my fortune, each white  
 upon white upon white."

When the boy heard this, he put off the white tunic and appeared in the red one, whereupon Abou Nuwas redoubled in expressions of admiration and repeated the following verses:

Appeared in a garment, the colour of flame, A foeman of mine, "The  
 bel véil," by name.

"Thou'rt a full man," I said in my wonder, "and com'st in a garment  
 that putteth the roses to shame."

Hath the red of thy cheek clad thy vest upon thee Or in heart's blood  
 of lovers hast tintured the same?"

Quoth he, "Twice the sun lately gave me the wedge; From the rubicund  
 hue of his setting it came."

So my garment and wine and the colour so clear Of my cheek are as  
 flame upon flame upon flame."

Then the boy doffed the red tunic and abode in the black; whereupon Abou Nuwas redoubled in attention to him and repeated the following verses:

1. The first part of the report is a summary of the work done during the year. It is a brief statement of the results of the work, and is intended to give a general impression of the progress made.

[illegible][illegible]

'Cont und thee!' cried the Kharit. 'It is as if thou hadst been present with us.' Then he took him by the hand and carried him to the dunsel, who was clad in a dress and veil of blue. When Abu Naw's saw her, he

was profuse in expressions of admiration and recited the following verses :

Say to the lovely maid, i' the veil of azure dight, " By Allah, O my life,  
have pity on my plight !  
For when the fair entreats her lover cruelly, Sighs of all longing rend  
his bosom day and night.  
So, by thy charms and by the whiteness of thy cheek, Have ruth upon a  
heart for love consumed outright  
Incline to him and be his stay 'gainst storms of love, Nor let what fools  
may say find favour in thy sight "

Then the damsel set wine before the Khalif and taking the lute, played a lively measure and sang the following verses :

Wilt thou be just in thy love to others and deal with me Unjustly and  
put me away, while others have joy in thee ?  
Were there for lovers a judge, to whom I might complain Of thee, he  
would do me justice and judge with equity.  
If thou forbid me to pass thy door, yet from afar To greet thee and to  
bless, at least, I shall be free.

The Khalif bade her ply Abou Nuwas with wine, till he lost his wits ; when he gave him a full cup, and he drank a draught of it and held the cup in his hand. Er Reshid bade the girl take the cup from him and conceal it ; so she took it and hid it between her thighs. Then he drew his sword and standing at the poet's head, pricked him with the point ; whereupon he awoke and saw the Khalif standing over him, with a drawn sword. At this sight the fumes of the wine fled from his head and the Khalif said to him, ' Make me some verses and tell me therein what is come of thy cup ; or I will cut off thy head.' So he improvised the following verses :

My tale, indeed, is hard to tell : The thief was none but yon gazelle.  
She stole my cup of wine, whereof My lips had drunken but one spell,  
And hid it in a place, for which My heart's desire's unspeakable.  
I name it not, for awe of him, In whom the right thereof doth dwell.

'Confound thee!' quoth the Khelif. 'How knewst thou that? But we accept what thou sayst.' Then he ordered him robes of honour and a thousand dinars, and he went away, rejoicing.

### THE MAN WHO STOLE THE DISH OF GOLD IN WHICH THE DOG ATE.

There was once a man, who was overborne with debt, and his case was straitened upon him, so that he left his property and family and went forth in distraction. He wandered on at random till he came to a high walled and splendidly built city and entered it in a state of wretchedness and despair, gnawed with hunger and worn with the toil of his journey. As he passed through one of the streets, he saw a company of notables going along, so he followed them, till they entered a house like to a royal palace. He entered with them, and they stayed not till they came in presence of a man of the most dignified and majestic aspect, seated at the upper end of a saloon and surrounded by pages and servants, as he were of the sons of the Viziers. When he saw the visitors, he rose and received them with honour, but the poor man was confounded at the goodliness of the place and the crowd of servants and attendants and drawing back, in fear and perplexity, sat down apart in a place afar off, where none should see him.

After awhile, in came a man with four hunting dogs, clad in various kinds of silk and brocade and having on their necks collars of gold with chains of silver, and tied up each dog in a place set apart for him; after which he went out and presently returned with four dishes of gold, full of rich meats, one of which he set before each dog. Then he went away and left them, whilst the poor man began to eye the food, for stress of hunger, and

Night  
ccxli.

we let him have so much to eat of the morsels eaten with him, but fear of him made the dogs scarce. One of the dogs looked at him and gave the Moslem an impression with a knowledge of his case, so he followed him from the pitter and brought him to the man, who came and ate, till he was full. The dog would have followed him, but the dog rushed off first towards him and his jaw, so he took it to the next and what was left in it for himself. So the man took the dish and leaving the house, went his way, and none followed him. Then he journeyed to another city, where he sold the dish and buying goods with the price, returned to his own town. There he sold his goods and paid his debts; and he prospered and became rich and at his ease.

After some years had passed, he said to himself, 'Needs must I repair to the city of the owner of the dish, which the dog bestowed on me, and carry him its price, together with a fit and handsome present.' So he took the price of the dish and a suitable present and setting out, journeyed night and day, till he came to the city and entering, went straight to the place where the man's house had been, but lo, he found there nothing but mouldering ruins and dwelling-places laid waste, over which the raven croaked, for the place was desert and the environs charged out of knowledge. At this, his heart and soul were troubled and he repeated the words of him who saith :

The privy chambers are void of all their hidden store, As hearts of the  
fear of God and the virtues all of yore.

Changed is the vale and strange to me are its gazelles, And those I knew  
of old its sandhills are no more.

And those of another :

The phantom of Suada came to me by night, near the break of day,  
And roused me, whereas my comrades all in the desert sleeping lay.  
But, when I awoke to the dream of the night, that came to visit me, I  
found the air void and the wonted place of our rendezvous far away

